UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/CRIC(1)/3
3 June 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
First session
18 - 29 November 2002
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPH 2(A) AND (B), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION BY AFFECTED ASIAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

Note by the secretariat

1. Pursuant to article 22, paragraph 2(a) and (b), and article 26 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Conference of the Parties (COP) shall review the implementation of the Convention and its institutional arrangements. By its decision 1/COP.5, the COP decided to establish a committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as a subsidiary body of the COP to assist it in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention, and to adopt the terms of reference of the CRIC as contained in the annex to that decision. The COP also decided that the first session of the CRIC should review updates to reports already available and/or new reports and that the review should focus on specific thematic topics.

2. In accordance with the same decision, the secretariat has prepared a synthesis and preliminary analysis of these reports, setting out the trends emerging in the implementation of the Convention. A synthesis and preliminary analysis of reports submitted by affected Asian country Parties are contained in ICCD/CRIC(1)/3/Add.1.

3. In accordance with decision 11/COP.1, the secretariat has compiled summaries of the reports. The summaries of reports from affected Asian country Parties are contained in ICCD/CRIC(1)/3/Add.2.

4. Decision 1/COP.5 also requests the secretariat to take advantage of its ongoing activities at the regional and/or subregional levels to disseminate information stemming from its preliminary analysis and seek to obtain feedback with a view to enriching the Committee's work base. The regional and subregional feedback obtained at a meeting organized for the Asian region from 8 to 12 July 2002 in Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, is presented in ICCD/CRIC(1)/3/Add.3.

- - - - -

GE.02-61741

UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.
General

ICCD/CRIC(1)/3/Add.1
10 June 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
First session
18-29 November 2002
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPH 2(a) AND (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION BY AFFECTED ASIAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

SYNTHESIS AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN REPORTS SUBMITTED BY AFFECTED ASIAN COUNTRY PARTIES, AND PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN ASIA

Note by the secretariat

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
PART ONE			
SYNTHESIS AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM AFFECTED ASIAN COUNTRY PARTIES		1 - 113	3
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 7	3
II.	OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL REPORTS AND EMERGING TRENDS	8 - 21	4
III.	SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS	22 - 84	8
	A. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations	23 - 34	8
	B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or Arrangements	35 - 43	10

		Paragraphs	Page
C.	Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements	44 - 49	12
D.	Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies	50 - 58	14
E.	Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought	59 - 72	16
F.	Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment	73 - 80	18
G.	Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how	81 - 84	19
IV.	LESSONS LEARNED	85 - 102	20
A.	Lessons from national action programme formulation and the implementation process	85 - 95	20
B.	Lessons from the reporting system	96 - 102	22
V.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	103 - 113	23

PART TWO

PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN ASIA		114 - 160	25
I.	INTRODUCTION	114	25
II.	BACKGROUND	115 - 123	25
III.	SYNTHESIS OF TRENDS FOR SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES	124 - 132	27
IV.	PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES	133 - 144	29
V.	PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME	145 - 151	32
VI.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	152 - 160	35

Annexes

I.	List of country Parties having submitted their national reports	38
II.	Status of action programmes and national forums/workshops	39

Part One

SYNTHESIS AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM AFFECTED ASIAN COUNTRY PARTIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has been ratified, acceded to and/or accepted by 179 Parties, of which fifty-one are Asian countries. In order that progress in the implementation of the UNCCD can be assessed, country Parties are required to submit periodic reports on their actions in accordance with a timetable set by the Conference of the Parties (COP) as stated in article 26 of the Convention. This periodic review process was launched successfully at meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the fourth session of the COP, and subsequently in March/April 2001.

2. In preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, a number of regional and subregional meetings were held in Asia which recognized desertification and land degradation as constraints on achieving sustainable development in Asia and called for priority implementation of the Convention. The Millennium Assembly of the General Assembly, which 147 heads of State and Government attended, resolved in its Millennium Declaration to halve global poverty by the year 2015, and to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at local, national and regional levels. Both issues are closely related to the UNCCD's objectives in Asia. Echoing these goals, the President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) stated at the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the ADB Board of Governors in May 2002 that "Developing Asia is still home to two-thirds of the world's poor. Achieving the ultimate millennium development goal of eradicating extreme poverty depends first and foremost on the reduction of poverty in Asia". Implementing the UNCCD is intimately related to the achievement of this goal.

3. At the fifth session of the COP in October 2001, the Parties decided (decision 1/COP.5) to establish a committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as a subsidiary body of the COP to assist Parties in regularly reviewing implementation. The first review following this decision, which will include the Asian country Parties, will take place at the first session of the CRIC in November 2002. The country Parties were asked to submit their reports for this review by 30 April 2002.

4. The secretariat adapted the Help Guide for preparation of the first set of national reports in 2000 to bring it into line with decisions 1/COP.5, 3/COP.5 and 10/COP.5. The updated Help Guide and explanatory note (ICCD/CRIC(1)/INF.5) was sent to the country Parties in December 2001. The country Parties were requested to prepare national reports with a major focus on seven key thematic topics as set forth in paragraph 10 of decision 1/COP.

5. In response to the above-mentioned mandate and communications from the secretariat, 30 national reports were received from among the 45 affected

developing country Parties in Asia. One Party submitted only the summary report and one Party submitted a list of tables with ongoing and planned projects and a description of each project. The format and content of the reports were standardized in most cases in accordance with the Help Guide and explanatory note. The present document has been prepared by the secretariat in accordance with paragraph 7 of decision 1/COP.5. It compiles, synthesizes and provides a preliminary analysis of these reports according to the thematic priorities identified for the CRIC.

6. The synthesis document follows more or less the same general overall structure as the earlier report, ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.1(D), with changes made to present the information contained in the national reports according to the key thematic areas. It should be noted that the reporting format used by the countries was not necessarily aligned to the key thematic areas used in the present document.

7. The overview of national reports and regional trends (section II) provides an insight into the land degradation, desertification and drought problems faced by the country Parties of the region. This section also covers trends and new developments in the key thematic areas. The synthesis of information contained in national reports (section III), in addition to highlighting priority activities in the key thematic areas, outlines noteworthy endeavours to combat desertification and land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought. The section on lessons learned relates to country Parties' experience with the preparation of national action programmes (NAPs) and the reporting process. Part one of the document ends with a set of conclusions and recommendations for consideration at the first session of the CRIC.

II. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL REPORTS AND EMERGING TRENDS

8. The fact that the Convention has been ratified, acceded to and/or accepted by 51 Asian countries to date underlines the importance of the Convention as a powerful tool to combat desertification and land degradation, and mitigate the effects of drought. Many countries have policies which are in line with UNCCD objectives even though they have not been formulated under NAPs. The national plans (five-year plans and long-term perspective plans) operational in many countries are essentially policy guidelines, and increasingly they are reflecting UNCCD objectives. This is a sign that the UNCCD is beginning to be recognized in the broader development plans of individual Asian countries, which their development partners have repeatedly requested. NAPs are seen by Asian countries as a necessary tool for developing policy guidelines for facilitating Convention implementation, and many Asian countries are in the process of NAP formulation. In some cases, forestry, biodiversity, poverty alleviation and agricultural development programmes also promote the objectives of the UNCCD.

9. All the Parties recognize that desertification, land degradation and drought impose a heavy cost on their economies, threaten many people's livelihoods, reduce food security, aggravate poverty and lead to forced displacement and migration. The Parties further appreciate the need to combat them in a planned, organized and determined way.

10. At the global level, it is estimated that the annual income forgone in the areas immediately affected by desertification amounts to approximately US$ 42 billion each year. The indirect economic and social costs suffered outside the affected areas, including the influx of "environmental refugees" and losses to national food production, may be much greater. Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification. In addition, about one billion people in over one hundred countries are at risk. These people include many of the world's poorest, most marginalized, and politically weak citizens. Most of these are in the Asia region.

11. Some Parties in the region have provided estimates of economic costs. One estimate for a large affected country is US$ 6.5 billion per year, and another, for an island country, is US$ 50 million in 1998. These estimates do not include all costs and have to be taken as lower bounds. The problem is likely to get worse if no action is taken. In the Asian and Pacific region over 75 per cent of the land may be affected by habitat disturbance and other kinds of environmental damage as a result of rapid and poorly planned infrastructure growth. Some Parties mention soil loss as a major problem, mainly due to deforestation, wind and water erosion. Some countries, including those with a seasonal abundance of water, reported substantial damage to crop production due to the frequent occurrence of drought. Degradation of pasture land is causing enormous economic loss to some countries.

12. Many Parties either have prepared or are in the process of preparing their NAPs, have set priorities and taken many institutional and legislative measures. Parties also appreciate that combating desertification and land degradation requires cooperation from concerned government ministries and agencies and has to be integrated into the national development strategy. Thus most Parties have set up a national coordinating body (NCB) with wide representation from ministries and other stakeholders. Many Parties have also adopted a participatory process to create a sense of ownership among the stakeholders, whose cooperation is critical for successful action. A number of Parties have involved local groups and empowered them with the rights and resources they need to implement projects. While for some Parties, participation in planning, decision-making and implementation has long been an accepted norm, today all Parties recognize the need for it. Even the Parties which did not use an elaborate participatory process for preparing their NAPs, now use stakeholder feedback to update and revise them.

13. Most Parties also recognize that participation can be meaningful only if the participants are aware and knowledgeable. Thus, awareness campaigns have been an integral part of the participation process of many Parties. Many Parties celebrate World Desertification Day, World Environment Day and World Water Day, with the widespread involvement of citizens. Most Parties have used radio, TV and published material to raise public awareness. A number of Parties have recognized the importance of targeting various groups, including young people, to generate environmental awareness. Environmental education has been made a part of school curricula, and some Parties have encouraged formation of environmental brigades in schools and tree planting by children. Some reports state that the text of the Convention and a number

of relevant information documents about the UNCCD have been translated and made available to the local population in their own languages.

14. Most Parties have recognized the need for coordinated policy frameworks as well as for the necessity to ensure that the policies to combat desertification, arrest and reverse land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought are part of their strategies for sustainable development. When forests and mangroves are preserved to reduce erosion, it also synergistically preserves habitats and maintains or improves the biodiversity of flora and fauna. Afforestation carried out for the UNCCD also sequesters additional carbon and furthers the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). To fully exploit the synergy between the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), UNCCD and UNFCCC, Parties need capacity to formulate better integrated projects and programmes for funding by mechanisms like the Global Environment Facility (GEF). From an ecological and socioeconomic point of view it also seems logical that funding mechanisms like the GEF should support UNCCD activities more proactively.

15. The specific priorities that Parties give to their UNCCD policies depend on what they perceive as the main problems and the main causes leading to them:

(a) Expansion of arid areas is often due to wind erosion, climatic conditions and overgrazing of pastures, aggravated by a nomadic lifestyle. Parties in West, North Central and North East Asia which find this to be a major problem, give priority to containing arid areas through various types of barrier, plantation belts, afforestation and dune stabilization. They also try to reduce pressure from overgrazing of pastures.

(b) Land degradation and loss of land productivity are major issues for many Parties. They are often caused by population pressure, loss of fertile land due to urbanization, unsuitable and excessive use of agricultural inputs such as water, fertilizers and pesticides, loss of topsoil due to erosion and faulty agricultural practices. Population policies are given a high priority by many of the Parties which face these problems. Improving water management, reducing waste, proper agricultural management, use of organic fertilizer, integrated pest management and watershed development are also given high priority by these Parties.

(c) Arresting deforestation is a major concern of many Parties. They give high priority to afforestation and improving management of forests. High priority is given to joint forest management and empowerment of local communities and households to regenerate barren land and wasteland in order to reduce the pressure on forests. Improving energy efficiency and promoting alternative energy sources are also on the priority list of some Parties.

(d) Some Parties are mainly concerned with drought, which is aggravated by the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), particularly in the Pacific islands. These Parties put emphasis on water management, ground water recharging, and on preparedness to deal with drought by means of stocks and relief works such as employment programmes.

(e) Water scarcity and local and seasonal aridity are widespread problems. Parties emphasize the need to augment supply, reduce demand and increase efficiency of use.

16. Many Parties have enacted or reviewed land tenure laws, user rights regulation, regulations to empower local bodies, special acts and laws for soil and water conservation, management of water resources, environmental protection, environmental impact assessment, forests, agriculture and disaster management, urbanization and construction regulation, fisheries management, regulation of agrochemicals use and pesticide use, integrated pest management act, safe drinking water and sanitation policy, health and population sector strategy, education policy and local government codes. Only one Party, however, has passed a comprehensive law to combat desertification, enacted land use management and zoning regulations, set up institutions and coordinating mechanisms and assigned roles to various government institutions.

17. These examples illustrate the progress reporting Parties have made in planning action. Some have also taken measures to combat desertification, arrest and reverse land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. Yet the efforts made fall far short of what is needed. While most Parties have mobilized some funds from their own internal resources, availability of adequate finance and external assistance to meet these needs seems to be the main bottleneck in the implementation of programmes. Many Parties acknowledge and appreciate the financial and technical support provided by international partners. This involvement, however, falls short of partnerships for implementation as understood in the UNCCD.

18. Many Parties reported that a database relating to UNCCD objectives had yet to be established. But many of the databases maintained by government institutions and projects, if coordinated and effectively linked, can help to set up a national desertification information system. Much remains to be done towards establishing benchmarks and indicators to determine progress and achievements, and to monitor and evaluate the impact of ongoing and completed projects and programmes. Parties need finance, technology, human resources and institutional capacities to develop their systems, and demand will grow as the UNCCD moves ahead with its implementation process.

19. All Parties recognize the paramount importance for long-term success of applying modern technologies and the latest scientific achievements in combating desertification, and in the broader area of more rational utilization of natural resources (land, water, energy) and environmental protection in general. Many reporting Parties recognized the importance of subregional and regional cooperation and of sharing experience and information. Hence the importance of technical assistance shared between developing country Parties. The thematic programme networks (TPNs) provide a good mechanism and deserve sustained support.

20. As in the last reporting exercise, almost all reporting Parties mentioned or identified their financial, technical and technological needs for implementation of the Convention. Finance, technological assistance and capacity building are the most immediate needs for most of the reporting Parties.

21. The synthesis of the reports submitted by Parties shows the usefulness of the reporting process and identifies the modifications that need to be made as Parties move to the next phase of implementation of their projects and programmes.

III. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS

22. According to decision 1/COP.5, country Parties agreed to structure the review process of the CRIC on key thematic topics. Accordingly, the synthesis of information contained in the national reports is based on the key thematic topics.

A. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations

23. All Parties recognize that the involvement of stakeholders in the NAP process increases the sense of ownership and the level of sustainability. The Parties also appreciate that participation generates awareness and creates consensus. All these are essential to effective implementation of NAPs. Thus, most Parties which have prepared or are in the process of preparing NAPs following the last reports, have involved various stakeholders, such as officials of government ministries and agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local government officials, scholars, media personnel, even international agencies and citizens old and young of both genders. Their involvement has been achieved through national and regional workshops, seminars, public hearings, inter-ministerial meetings, feedback through questionnaires, through participatory rapid appraisals and through representation on the committee that prepared the NAP. Some Parties have even used a bottom-up approach in the preparation of their NAPs.

24. Most Parties recognize that participation can be meaningful only if the participants are aware and knowledgeable. The reports of some Parties recognize that radical socioeconomic transformation in the post-independence period, including democratization, decentralization and land reforms, makes the outcome of the UNCCD implementation process especially dependent upon the degree of awareness and participation of wider layers of the population, down to the grass-roots level.

25. Thus awareness campaigns have been an integral part of the participation process of many Parties. World Desertification Day is observed for this purpose. In order to obtain citizen involvement, one Party requires each adult to plant three to five trees a year. Most Parties have used radio, TV and published material to raise public awareness. One report refers to a communication and information plan including publication, documentation, web site, contact databases and feedback system. It also

stresses the importance of setting up networks to exchange cutting edge information on knowledge, technology and impacts at local, national and international levels on NAP priority issues. A number of Parties have recognized the importance of targeting various groups, including the young, to generate environmental awareness. Environmental education has been made a part of school curricula, and some have encouraged the formation of environmental brigades in schools and tree planting by children. Some reporting Parties have developed relevant programmes or courses at local universities, at the Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate levels, and in some training institutes.

26. Some countries have emphasized the importance of "training trainers", to develop further and facilitate the participatory process. Some reports state that the text of the Convention and a number of relevant information documents about the UNCCD have been translated and made available to the local population in their own languages.

27. Some country Parties of the Central Asian subregion mentioned the entry into force of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters as an important factor in further enhancing the participatory process.

28. While, for some Parties, participation in planning, decision-making and implementation has long been an accepted norm, today all Parties recognize the need for it. Even the Parties which did not use an elaborate participatory process to prepare their NAPs, now use stakeholder feedback to update and revise them.

29. Some Parties reported that the non-governmental organizations concerned with environmental and desertification issues were still increasing in number and have been playing an increasingly important role in stimulating the participatory process. Two Parties mentioned that some NGOs overly concentrate their activities on urban rather than rural problems. One Party considered that the main direction of NGOs' work in the future should be to develop cooperation with NGOs of other Parties to the Convention; set up an organizational structure for an NGO national network; prepare national action plans for NGOs and their integration into country NAPs; collect information on desertification processes; participate in implementation of new technological projects; participate more actively in ecological education, including its joint financing with national ministries of science and education. However, most NGOs are constrained by limited resources, and some need capacity building. It is an encouraging sign that the ability of such organizations to reach out to people at the grass-roots level was reflected in many national reports.

30. Participation is even more important for the implementation of NAPs. Measures to combat desertification require efforts spread out over large areas, and in many places local efforts are required. While participation in the NAP process affords a sense of ownership of the broad strategy, ownership of local-level action plans is equally important. Most Parties appreciate this and have taken various measures to ensure stakeholder participation.

31. Measures undertaken by the Parties include empowerment of local government institutions at subdistrict or even village level by giving them the power to decide on projects and some financial autonomy. Some Parties have provided for the reservation of seats for women in such bodies. Citizens' participation in resource regeneration and management is encouraged by giving citizens the right to use products such as fuel, fodder and non-timber products from joint forest management or wasteland development. One Party has gone further and used economic incentives: barren land was auctioned to households to restore it and establish forests. One Party noted, however, that for full and effective participation of citizens, it is not enough to give them user rights to the products of a project, but that project planning should also be done with stakeholder participation. The Party feels that if the project-implementing authority is accountable to higher-level government rather than local government, participation and cooperation may not be successful.

32. Some Parties consider that the introduction on a broad front of advanced information and communication technologies (Internet, e-mail, web sites, computerized databases and information networks, etc.) has had and will continue to have a very favourable impact on the UNCCD-related participatory process, involving civil society, NGOs, community-based organizations, and academic and business circles.

33. Most of the reporting countries acknowledge the importance of women in society. Attention has been given to gender issues in some policies. Most of the reporting Parties have undertaken many measures and devised projects to promote women and enhance their situation in society. These measures and projects range from loans to promotion of education, employment and women's organizations. One of the reporting Parties mentioned that women make up 20 per cent of the NCB, including the President. Another Party admitted that the role of women is very limited owing to their lack of education. In general, the number of women involved, their role and the degree of their involvement were not clear in most reports.

34. In many cases the composition of the NCBs is given. But the role of stakeholders and the degree of their involvement in the decision-making process are not clearly documented. A few Parties that have not yet prepared a NAP indicated that when they do so, they would involve all stakeholders in the process. To this end, an inventory of stakeholders would be drawn up before meetings were held to organize preparation of the NAPs.

B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

35. Most Parties have taken a number of legal measures and enacted laws to facilitate the various projects and programmes. One Party has passed a comprehensive law to combat desertification, and revised the criminal law, land use management and zoning regulations to be consistent with it. It has also set up institutions and coordinating mechanisms and allocated roles to various governments institutions. Many Parties have enacted land tenure laws and user rights regulations. Regulations to empower local bodies have also been enacted by some Parties. Many Parties have enacted special acts and

laws, or reviewed existing ones, on soil and water conservation, management of water resources, environmental protection, environmental impact assessment, forests, agriculture and disaster management, urbanization and construction regulation, fisheries management, agrochemicals use regulation, pesticide use regulation, integrated pest management act, safe drinking water and sanitation policy, health and population sector strategy, education policy and local government codes.

36. On institutional issues, most reports provide information which shows that in general the period of a few years immediately following the ratification of the Convention, known as the "organizational" period, has been completed. In most country Parties, NCBs, including multi-sectoral steering committees, have been established; national action plans have been worked out, integrated into national economic and social development and environment protection plans and linked with national, intraregional, subregional and local approaches.

37. Almost all the Parties have set up NCBs and have designated a national focal point (NFP). The NCBs are generally widely based. There are representatives of various concerned ministries, such as agriculture, water, environment, forestry, etc. Most of them also have representatives from research institutions, academics, private-sector and civil-society organizations, including women and young people. These NCBs, therefore, can be expected to coordinate actions and policies across different ministries and to provide linkages between NAP projects and development plans such as five-year plans.

38. The NFPs are generally located in the ministry most concerned with the problem, often the ministry of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, water, rural development or the environment. The financial resources of most NFPs come from government allocations or donor-funded projects.

39. In most cases, the NCB human resources (total staff, number of managers, professionals, their levels and areas of expertise) are not well documented. The following aspects of the NCBs were not clear in most reports: procedure for nominating members; powers and resources available; composition and government/civil society and men/women ratios; means of communication or networking among members and the groups they represent; timetable of activities and frequency of meetings.

40. Apart from NCBs, other institutions have been set up by a number of Parties. There are national committees for disaster management, national committees for sustainable development, state-level agencies, local-level bodies, desertification cells, environment protection councils, technical experts' cooperation bodies, expert committees on land degradation and so on. These bodies complement the work of the NCBs and provide support to them. A number of countries have established research and development institutions to combat desertification, training centres and monitoring centres.

41. Some Parties stressed the need for permanent improvement and adaptation of the legislative framework in the field of environmental protection, in accordance with changes and developments that have taken place in both the natural and socioeconomic spheres, particularly in economies in transition.

42. Some reporting Parties admitted that the information system capacity of NFPs is limited and that a database relating to desertification had not yet been established. But many of the databases maintained by government institutions and projects are quite relevant to desertification. It was recognized in the reports that these databases would be a valuable asset in the national efforts to combat desertification, especially if coordinated and effectively linked to the establishment of a national desertification information system. Some other Parties are still in the process of developing a desertification database. One Party mentioned that they host available information on desertification and other relevant topics on a web site to facilitate the exchange of information internally and externally.

43. Some Parties consider the lack of adequate state financing as a serious factor hampering further improvement of existing organizational structures and better coordination among them. One Party states in this context that "permanent staff reductions" due to national budgetary constraints are adversely affecting the quality of state governance in the field of environmental protection.

C. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements

44. Most Parties have followed an elaborate consultative process in which various stakeholders from government, civil society, business, industry, the media and the academic community were involved. In addition, a number of Parties reported that they had involved international agencies and partners from developed countries. This involvement, however, falls short of partnerships for the implementation of the UNCCD.

45. A few Parties have mobilized some funds from their own internal resources. Most Parties emphasize the acute shortage of necessary financing. But internal resources are limited as a result of persistent economic difficulties, including those typical of developing countries and countries in transition. In a number of countries the NAP is financed through regular internal budget allocations from government. A few have also sought to mobilize domestic financial institutions and private companies to supplement these funds. Most of them, however, see the need for additional funding from international agencies, donor agencies and multilateral institutions. Many countries have acknowledged the role of the UNCCD process and appealed for additional funding for the UNCCD process. Recognizing the crucial role of external financing for the UNCCD process, all Parties urge developed country partners to increase their financial and technical assistance in order to secure the implementation of NAPs. One Party considers that the issue of partnership should be discussed at the forthcoming COP and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

46. It was noted that the catalytic assistance provided by international organizations and agencies had been instrumental in facilitating UNCCD implementation. They include bodies and organizations of the United Nations system such as the UNCCD secretariat, the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD, the Office to Combat Desertification and Drought of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP/UNSO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia (ESCAP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), United Nations specialized agencies including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Bank, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and other multilateral and regional organizations including the European Union (EU), the GEF, ADB, and some developed country partners such as the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Japan International Forestry Promotion and Cooperation Centre (JIFPRO) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). These have been mentioned in one or more reports as having provided financial and technical assistance in various areas relating to the environment and land degradation and/or desertification. Many Parties acknowledge and appreciate the financial and technical support provided by international partners. In addition, international NGOs, such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN), Oxfam, Yomiuri and the Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement-International (OISCA-International) have also helped in some projects.

47. In some cases interaction among developing countries' experts to exchange ideas, experience and technologies have also been reported as very desirable. A number of mutually beneficial joint projects and programmes could be developed. The scope for such partnerships needs to be further exploited. One country Party reported that it had provided financial support to other developing country Parties, as grants or loans, for development programmes, including programmes to combat desertification.

48. Some country Parties reported on meetings organized with developed country partners. In addition, regional and international seminars and symposiums on desertification and land degradation had been organized by many Parties, and supported and attended by international partners, with a view to sharing experience and mobilizing external resources. However, it is not clear whether follow-up steps are being taken to ensure continuity and concrete results.

49. One country Party mentioned that it has a special budget for consultations. Some Parties indicated that once the NAP had been finalized, and appropriate programmes identified and prioritized, consultation with various agencies and international donors would be necessary in order to mobilize much-needed resources. To this end, the need for a consultative process to build partnership arrangements between the affected and developed country Parties is largely recognized. Some Parties felt that in general the degree of support by, and participation of international organizations and developed country Parties in the preparation of NAPs remained low.

D. Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies

50. For a number of countries NAP activities are now part of their development plans. Thus combating desertification, land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought has become part of the general development and economic policies of these Parties.

51. One reporting country admitted that it did not have mechanisms available to coordinate and harmonize action to combat land degradation at national and local levels. Another country mentioned that on account of an overlap of responsibilities between the NFP host ministry and other ministries and stakeholders, local-level action to combat land degradation should be reviewed, analysed and better coordinated in order to achieve better efficiency, consistency and complementarity. As mentioned, some reporting country Parties are still developing NAPs, and all related programmes and actions will be reviewed, coordinated and incorporated into them.

52. Most Parties have recognized the need for a coordinated policy framework. Thus, policies for combating desertification have been framed in the context of Agenda 21 and sustainable development strategies. All reporting Parties consider combating desertification and land degradation as essential elements of sustainable development. Many have formulated plans and strategies and enacted legislation to promote sustainable use and development of various resources such as water, land, forests, marine resources and so on. Many have adopted strategies to implement Agenda 21 and have formulated local Agenda 21 programmes. The Parties also recognize that prevention of land degradation and desertification is better than cure and that prevention requires also action in other sectors and areas. They have also seen the need for decentralization in planning, programming and implementation activities, as well as the need for social equity in access to resources, rights and responsibilities. A number of Parties have emphasized population control to reduce pressure on natural resources as a very high priority. Most Parties see that the UNCCD is synergistically linked with Agenda 21, the CBD and, above all, their desire to reduce poverty.

53. Of the 35 Parties that reported either the first time, or the second time, or both, 16 have prepared their NAPs, five have integrated their UNCCD policies into other related programmes, seven are preparing their NAPs, five have yet to prepare them, and there is no information available for two Parties. This compares with corresponding numbers of 11, one, seven, 10 and five for the first reporting process. A few countries which do not have a NAP, however, have formulated national priorities and programmes within the context of their national environment action plan (NEAP). The change in the status of the NAP process compared to the previous reporting exercise is shown in annex II.

54. Most Parties have recognized that the policies to combat desertification, arrest and reverse land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought are part of their strategies for sustainable development and poverty reduction. The specific priorities for UNCCD policies depend on what

they perceive as the main problems and the main causes leading to them. Countries where expansion of arid areas and wind erosion are the main problems, give priority to containing arid areas through various types of barrier, plantation belts and afforestation. For many Parties land degradation and loss of land productivity are major issues. These are often caused by population pressure, loss of fertile land due to urbanization, unsuitable and excessive use of agricultural inputs such as water, fertilizers and pesticides, loss of topsoil due to erosion and inappropriate agricultural practices.

55. The Parties give high priority to the improvement of water management, reducing waste, proper agricultural management, use of organic fertilizers, integrated pest management and watershed development. One Party observed that soil loss from a tea garden with good agricultural practices can be as low as 330 kg per hectare per year compared with 20 tonnes per hectare per year from a poorly managed plantation. Arresting deforestation is a major concern of many Parties. They give high priority to afforestation and improving management of forests. Joint forest management and empowerment of local communities and households to regenerate barren land and wasteland are given high priority in order to reduce pressure on forests. Improving energy efficiency and promoting alternative energy sources are also on the priority list of some Parties. The Parties affected by drought and El Niño put emphasis on water management, ground water recharging and on preparedness to deal with drought by means of stocks and relief works such as employment programmes.

56. The synergy between the preservation of forests and mangroves to reduce erosion and the preservation of habitats for flora and fauna has been noted by a number of Parties, and they have backed up requests for funding through the GEF for projects to combat desertification on the basis of the link with the CBD.

57. All Parties recognize the importance of integrating activities to combat desertification and drought into broader programmes of environmental protection or even broader plans of socioeconomic development. In most cases, this integration process is carried out by cross-cutting, multidisciplinary NCBs in which various industrial, agricultural and socioeconomic sectors are represented by trained and experienced staff. Development of common databases and information networks is also mentioned as one of the integrating forces in this process. Some Parties, however, stated that economic difficulties and a shortage of financial resources were hampering recruitment of more highly qualified staff.

58. Most Parties recognize the synergy between CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC. However, in order to take advantage of it, they need trained people. Hence capacity building is very important. One Party mentioned that a workshop on synergy had been useful in promoting the integrated implementation of relevant policy measures and multi-beneficiary field projects.

E. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought

59. In most reports this is the largest and most varied section, as one would expect given countries' different circumstances. Some reports do not contain any information on the subject, while others mention measures that are still at the development or planning stage.

60. The range of measures taken extends over many areas, from legislative efforts, to project planning, to setting up agencies and institutions. The institutional action is summarized above and so only a brief reference will be made here.

61. Measures cover not only directly relevant areas but also related areas. The directly relevant areas include forest management, soil and water conservation, pasture management, special programmes for mountains, food security, early warning systems, drought and other disaster relief systems, and cross-sectoral programmes. Supportive action is required in many related areas, such as policy development, legal instruments, institutional strengthening, scientific studies and research, demonstration projects, gathering indigenous knowledge and its application, technology development and its transfer, education and awareness campaigns, capacity building and data gathering and sharing. One Party is planning measures such as cartographic stock-taking of degraded natural resources, introduction of economic mechanisms for the conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources (fines, soft credits, favourable taxation regime).

62. A number of countries have promoted measures to arrest soil degradation. These include reducing use of chemical fertilizers by better application, encouraging use of organic fertilizers, reducing use of chemical pesticides by relying on integrated pest management, better agricultural practices that minimize soil erosion, land development and levelling, and encouraging appropriate cropping patterns. Parties have used different approaches to reclaim degraded lands. Various institutional approaches have been used, but afforestation is the most common one. Some have used community-based regeneration, others have used individual initiative by transferring ownership rights to barren lands, yet others have used public afforestation programmes.

63. In order to arrest wind erosion, some Parties have promoted the growing of plants and trees as barriers on the periphery of deserts, windbreakers around cultivated land, and vegetative cover on susceptible land. In order to arrest water erosion, which is a serious problem in hilly regions, Parties have promoted the restoration of catchment areas.

64. Many Parties face land degradation due to water logging in irrigated areas. They have promoted irrigation optimization, appropriate cropping patterns and drainage development.

65. Water scarcity is a serious and prevalent problem. Many Parties have recognized the need to conserve water, to harvest rainwater, even at the household level in small drinking water tanks, and at community level by

restoring existing ponds, digging new ones and increasing ground water recharge. Ground water recharge also helps bring up the water table, which has gone down in many places due to over-extraction. Some Parties also mention rehabilitation of old irrigation systems to augment water availability. Surface water is better allocated by organizing water users associations, in some cases with the participation of women. A number of countries have developed comprehensive mangrove, forest and watershed management and rehabilitation plans.

66. To prevent deforestation and degradation of existing forests, many Parties have now instituted joint forest management plans, which give local communities or indigenous people the right to use the forest products on which many depend for their livelihood. Some Parties have also established forest reserves. Some countries have initiated measures to control shifting cultivation of the slash-and-burn type, which degrades forests.

67. In order to reduce pressure on forests, some Parties are also pursuing energy conservation by promoting the development and efficient use of other renewable options. For example, efficient cooking stoves are promoted by a number of Parties. Some Parties also encourage wood substitution. Some Parties have reported degradation of pastures due to overgrazing. They have taken measures to reduce the pressure on land by reducing animal numbers and increasing the productivity of pastures. In all these measures the role of traditional knowledge is recognized by a number of Parties. They have taken measures to assess and disseminate sustainable technologies obtained from traditional knowledge.

68. Many Parties appreciate the role of technology and scientific knowledge. Combating desertification calls for many innovative measures, which some Parties have developed. They include the "five belts" sand prevention technique along railways, narrow shelterbelts, small-grid tree plantations, rehabilitation of degraded land and a technique for stabilizing sand dunes along highways in desert regions, water-saving and irrigation techniques, plastic film sub-soil techniques for cultivating rice on sandy land, small-watershed management techniques, agroforestry and planting of medicinal plants on sandy land.

69. Some Parties have formulated long-term strategies. One Party has translated long-term strategies into short and medium-term plans and programmes.

70. Many Parties have prepared plans to provide relief and to minimize the impact of drought and extreme events such as those precipitated by ENSO. Some of them maintain buffer stocks of food grains and have set up mechanisms to provide relief through employment creation in the event of a drought. Parties from some island States face a double penalty from drought, as the lowered water table leads to salt water intrusion, damaging soils and reducing agricultural output further. Water conservation is seen to be very important by these Parties.

71. Many Parties see information and early warning as important. The need to strengthen meteorological departments was mentioned by some Parties. Parties which face drought want early warning systems. The impact of natural hazards such as land slides can be minimized by mapping sites that are prone to them. Then action can be taken to stabilize the sites or early warning given. One Party has set up a presidential task force on El Niño and La Niña.

72. From this it is clear that the reporting Parties have made a lot of progress on planning action. Some have also taken measures to combat desertification, arrest and reverse land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. Yet the level of effort falls far short of what is needed. It is not possible to tell from the reports, to what extent action to implement plans has been initiated since the last reporting period. Lack of finance and external assistance seem to be the main bottlenecks.

F. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment

73. All the reporting Parties recognized the need to monitor and evaluate the impacts of ongoing and completed projects and programmes, and to set benchmarks and indicators to determine progress and achievements. However, information on drought and desertification monitoring and assessment was very limited in most of the reports.

74. Some reporting Parties admitted that they do not have a planned methodology for establishing impact indicators. Some reporting Parties stated that they are using technologies like remote sensing and satellites to monitor and assess land use change, forest cover, and the extent of desertification and land degradation.

75. Some Parties have plans to supplement remote sensing data with periodic ground level surveys, as the interpretation of remote sensing data requires verification on the ground. Some countries plan to make digital data available to all. Some have identified opportunities for using local bodies and user groups in monitoring progress.

76. A few Parties have already organized databases on land use, forest cover and soil degradation; some of these provided relevant statistics in their reports. Since lack of baseline information was found to hamper the preparation of action plans, a number of Parties have established institutional arrangements to create databases with Geographic Information System (GIS). Some of the reporting country Parties mentioned that they have many related databases and projects which are not harmonized or coordinated. However, some reported that the expense of monitoring and assessment and of establishing a database on desertification combined with lack of financial resources and lack of, or limited, capacity was slowing progress in this area in particular. Data on desertification and drought still need to be properly organized in most countries.

77. One Party has plans to establish a number of long-term monitoring stations for assessing the extent of desertification every five years. At the same time project progress will be monitored every year and a quick feedback system set up.

78. Very few Parties have any concrete plans for drought monitoring and forecasting. Some Parties plan to expand their network of meteorological stations and develop forecasting techniques to obtain early warnings. One Party has plans to obtain regular forecasts on the drought situation at one-month and three-month intervals. It has also plans to conduct an assessment of pasture health every ten days in order to be able to anticipate scarcity.

79. A few countries have listed the indicators for which they intend to collect data to monitor and assess desertification and land degradation. These include land use and forest area data, water levels in reservoirs, discharge into major streams and rivers, depth of water table, suspended load in major water streams, and saline water intrusion. One country has planned pilot projects to test the indicators.

80. Much remains to be done in this area. Countries need finance, technology and capacity to develop their systems. Only a few Parties have set up rosters of experts; some have followed up the suggestions made by the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

G. Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

81. All Parties recognize the paramount importance for long-term success of applying modern technologies and the latest scientific achievements in combating desertification, and in the broader area of the more rational utilization of natural resources (land, water, energy) and environmental protection in general. Among the technologies required are GIS, remote sensing, forecasting, analytical tools for impact assessment and appropriate technologies. All Parties have sought technological aid and many have joined the TPNs.

82. Many Parties have recognized the importance of indigenous knowledge and experience in farming systems, sustainable management of natural resources, water conservation, etc. Many Parties have developed effective techniques for combating desertification and they are willing to share them with others. Many reporting Parties recognize the importance of subregional and regional cooperation and sharing experience and information. Hence the importance of technical assistance shared between developing country Parties. The thematic programme networks provide a useful mechanism.

83. Some reporting country Parties have undertaken activities at the subregional and regional levels including conferences and workshops to exchange experience and knowledge with other country Parties. Some Parties reported that their national scientific and technical institutions are participating in regional and international activities to combat desertification. Many Parties have established research institutions. In

most places research is carried out principally in state-financed national academies of science and other institutes.

84. In view of the financial constraints, encouraging subregional cooperation in the training of personnel may significantly improve access to appropriate knowledge and know-how. In this context one country Party with extensive experience of training experts from developing countries in combating desertification, reported on activities aimed at promoting the exchange of experience and dissemination of appropriate knowledge among interested countries.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

A. Lessons from national action programme formulation and the implementation process

85. Most of the reporting Parties have already formulated, or are in the process of formulating NAPs with the participation of civil society, and are seeking feedback in revising their NAPs. Some Parties have also used the participatory process in the preparation of their national reports.

86. Many reporting Parties recognized the complementarities between NAPs and national development plans relating to natural resources, particularly national environmental action plans (NEAP) and national conservation strategies. Some of them have left the NAP under the NEAP. Enhanced inter-ministerial coordination is a positive outcome of the UNCCD process.

87. While the synergy between the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC is recognized, the process of formulating and implementing NAPs needs to be strengthened. The development of programmes based on cross-convention synergy requires special skills and capacities, which have to be built up.

88. As in the first reporting exercise, almost all reporting Parties mentioned or identified their financial, technological, capacity-building and data-system needs for implementation of the Convention.

89. Financial needs are the most pressing problem, particularly for Parties which have formulated their NAPs and are now ready to move ahead with implementation. In most cases, the consultative process does not seem to have led yet to partnership agreements as envisaged in the UNCCD. Without such partnerships, progress towards implementing the UNCCD will remain very slow. Most of the reports indicate that resource scarcity is the major constraint on action. It seems there is urgent need to establish a more formalized process of regular consultation with international partners at the country level, to set up partnership arrangements and to review the progress of the NAPs. The purpose of these exchanges is to remove bottlenecks, agree on priority measures and mobilize external resources for the implementation process. Such a consultative process will launch the operational phase of the Convention, facilitate policy consensus and integrate programming of natural resource enhancement in dry lands. Monitoring and evaluation of activities within the NAP framework need to take place within an agreed framework.

90. Technological needs include strengthening national, subregional and regional scientific, technical and technological research capabilities, creating an enabling environment to promote the transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of appropriate technologies for combating desertification, preventing land degradation and monitoring and forecasting drought. To this end, regional and international cooperation in the form of academic and professional exchange programmes between Parties (between developing and developed country Parties and among developing country Parties) should be promoted to encourage the sharing of experience and lessons learned.

91. The need for capacity building remains critical for Parties which are still in the process of developing their NAPs and those which have already done so. To prepare NAPs, Parties need capacities for analytical and scientific work, planning and policy formulation, effective coordination of national, subregional, regional and international activities, environmental and resource management policies and legislation, promotion of sustainable use of natural resources, traditional and indigenous knowledge, know-how, practices and technologies, preparation of emergency integrated plans to address the effects of drought and other natural or human-induced disasters, including forest fires, and improving food security. Existing academic, scientific, technical and research institutions need to be strengthened to help achieve the aforementioned objectives.

92. Parties also need baseline data, the lack of which has hampered their efforts to prepare NAPs. For effective monitoring such data need to be regularly updated. Hence there is a need for enhancing human, institutional and technical monitoring capabilities; assessing degraded lands, aridity and the desertification process; data collection, analysis, management, reporting and dissemination; upgrading research and observation technologies, in particular enhancement of national meteorological, climatological and hydrological capabilities in weather forecasting and drought early warning systems; remote sensing and GIS, and studies of linkages between desertification and climate change.

93. To promote regional cooperation and the sharing of experience among Parties, national or regional clearing houses should be set up for the purpose of information sharing and networking in combating desertification and adapting to climate change.

94. A number of countries have promoted community forestry and joint forest management programmes. The lessons learned by one country from such programmes is that land allocation for community forestry development should be carried out in parallel with sound land classification and land use planning performed with grass-roots participation and accompanied by appropriate policies. It was reported that some 70 per cent of the land allotted was not used by poor households for want of investment resources. Moreover, to improve the quality of household plantation and to improve the income of forest-dependent farmers the following supportive services and measures must be undertaken: (a) integrated extension in silviculture, husbandry, cattle and poultry raising; (b) technical base such as growing stock, species matching, pest and disease control, productivity; (c) training

of local extension staff in planning, grass-roots communication, demand-driven adaptive research trials, and evaluation; (d) improving incentives and assistance to promote extension networks facilitating farmer-to-farmer exchanges of know-how and experience; and (e) increasing government financial assistance to promote growing of the high quality crops demanded by the market and indigenous trees of value to biological diversity.

95. Parties reported on the progress made in raising public awareness. It should be strengthened with a view to enlarging the involvement of stakeholders, including women.

B. Lessons from the reporting system

96. The explanatory note and the Help Guide have provided a common format and basis for the preparation of national reports by the Asian country Parties. In general, compliance with the Help Guide has been satisfactory. However, a number of Parties did not follow the Help Guide. This could be for one or more of the following reasons: (a) the Parties are not in a position to report the information as required by the Help Guide (e.g. lack of information due to lack of activities); (b) lack of coordination in information sharing; (c) NFPs were not sufficiently familiar with the UNCCD process; (d) the Parties did not have sufficient resources or capacity; and (e) they were short of time.

97. Parties did not always follow the structure and subheadings suggested by the Help Guide. This could be due to a lack of information. There is also evidence to suggest that some Parties were trying to streamline their reports.

98. Apart from the financial and technical constraints, very few Parties specifically reported on the problems and difficulties they encountered during formulation, implementation and reporting of their NAPs. Perhaps it would be useful to narrow the focus of reporting in order to facilitate assessment and make it easier to identify the problems and difficulties encountered, so that specific or common solutions may be found.

99. Some elements or subheadings of the Help Guide were covered by country Parties more extensively in their previous reports, and some more extensively in their current reports. Ongoing and planned projects were better differentiated in the current reports than in previous reports. However, differentiation between the first and second reporting cycles is not always clear.

100. The reports by and large provide a description, and some a fairly detailed one, of the status of the efforts in the country. Generally, they could have provided further information for assessing progress since the last reporting cycle. This may be due to the short time interval between the two.

101. In order to facilitate assessment of the progress made between reporting processes, information should be organized appropriately. A time profile of activities should be given, showing when they started, the expected completion date, etc. Statistical information in time series form

can be very useful in assessing progress. The reporting format and Help Guide should be revised accordingly.

102. Feedback from Parties on the reporting format would be necessary to facilitate a revision of the Help Guide format with a view to (a) improving the reporting process, including the analytical content of the national reports; and (b) communicating information as called for by article 26 of the Convention.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

103. Many Parties are now ready for action and if they are unable to start for want of resources, there is a real danger of losing momentum.

104. The Parties that are preparing or want to begin preparing their NAPs should be able to access some form of predictable support. And it is very important to provide support in the form of funding and capacity building to those ready for action, to sustain and maintain the credibility of the process.

105. A number of Parties have integrated their NAPs into their national development plans. Also, the NCB mechanism has promoted inter-ministry coordination. The role and function of the NCBs need to be enhanced to carry out effective coordination. Many Parties have used the UNCCD as a tool to further their programmes on poverty alleviation and sustainable development. These are appreciable achievements by the UNCCD.

106. For the management of dry land ecosystems, the synergy between CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC provides opportunities for an integrated approach to achieving objectives under all three conventions. Capacity building will be required in many country Parties to develop the necessary programmes and projects.

107. Despite efforts by many governements, much remains to be done in terms of capacity building, particularly at the grass-roots level, to ensure efficient implementation of NAPs. Some Parties are aiming to strengthen existing research institutions. Capacity building at various levels, including training, is a time-consuming process and it should be given high priority. This is an area where external assistance would be required.

108. Most country Parties do not have an established consultative mechanism between partners at the national or local levels. Consultative mechanisms between partners at the national or local levels should be established, including mechanisms for communicating information and allocating roles and tasks to the various partners. The country offices of multilateral and bilateral agencies are perceived as being particularly important for convening regular donor meetings and facilitating contacts between the NCB/NFP and international partners. Most Parties have also recommended close involvement of the UNCCD secretariat in partnership development.

109. A number of Parties have reviewed their past programmes and the causes and trends of desertification and land degradation. Several Parties report the existence of a mechanism for regular evaluation of ongoing programmes with a view to improving their content and implementation. It is important that an assessment mechanism is built in to the various projects and programmes.

110. Assessment and monitoring require indicators. While a few Parties have listed outcome indicators that they intend to use, most have not done so. The CST has recommended process and outcome indicators, but there is little evidence to suggest that the recommendations have been acted upon. These indicators would help Parties in assessing the progress and success of their efforts. It is essential to define a methodology for promoting practical application of benchmarks and indicators.

111. Data and information need to be organized and shared to facilitate planning and assessment. Countries' capacity needs to be strengthened. Database development has to be undertaken in the context of outcome assessment, project planning and prioritization. In many country Parties, data may be available in different ministries, but a coordinating mechanism is absent. Setting up such mechanisms may be cost-effective.

112. The role of science and technology has not been fully recognized, as relatively little attention has been paid to the recommendations of the CST. There is a need to disseminate the relevant information widely and to enlarge extension work on implementing the CST's recommendations.

113. In terms of the extent of the territories affected and the population numbers at risk, Asia is an important region for the UNCCD implementation process. This challenge has yet to be fully recognized at a time when the vulnerability of lower income groups in dry land ecosystems is likely to worsen due to accelerated climate change. In the face of these risks, all the Parties affirm the importance of the UNCCD for combating desertification, arresting land degradation and minimizing the impact of drought, while reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable development. Progress has clearly been made in the short interval. Yet affected Parties need more clarity on how the momentum can be maintained. For this, UNCCD implementation must deliver result-oriented, integrated programmes and projects with tangible benefits. This cannot be done unless the matter of resource mobilization is faced squarely, now.

Part Two

PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN ASIA

I. INTRODUCTION

114. The country Parties in Asia have been steadily developing and implementing a regional action programme (RAP). West Asia has already adopted its own subregional action programme (SRAP) and Central Asia has agreed on the areas of priority for its own SRAP. A form of subregional collaboration has also emerged in other subregions, but has yet to evolve into SRAPs. The RAP for Asia and the SRAP for West Asia are distinctive in being designed and implemented so as to facilitate implementation of the NAPs in each country. Part Two highlights developments during the period from May 2000 to May 2002 and raises relevant issued to be considered at the first session of the CRIC, scheduled for November 2002.

II. BACKGROUND

115. At the first regional conference held in New Delhi, India, in May 1996, the country Parties in Asia called for increased regional collaboration to facilitate Convention implementation. In August 1996, the Asian country Parties elaborated the regional action programme for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought in Asia (RAP for Asia), which was adopted at the regional ministerial conference held in Beijing, China, in August 1996. It was decided that the RAP for Asia should consist of six TPNs. The host countries of the TPNs were decided at the subsequent regional focal point meetings and regional group meetings. The TPNs for Asia and their host countries are: (i) desertification monitoring and assessment (TPN1) hosted by China and launched in July 1999, (ii) agroforestry and soil conservation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas (TPN2) hosted by India and launched in March 2000, (iii) rangeland management and sand dune fixation (TPN3) hosted by Iran and launched in May 2001, (iv) water resource management for dryland agriculture (TPN4) hosted by Syria, to be launched in July 2002, (v) strengthening capacities for combating desertification and mitigating drought impacts (TPN5) hosted by Mongolia, proposed launch in October 2002, and (vi) local area development initiatives (TPN6) hosted by Pakistan, proposed launch in 2003.

116. The country Parties in West Asia determined the broad outline of the subregional action programme for combating desertification and drought in West Asia (SRAP for West Asia) at the International Expert Group Meeting on the Preparation of the SRAP for West Asia held in Muscat, Oman, in September 1998. The SRAP for West Asia was further developed in collaboration with subregional organizations, and it was adopted at the Meeting on the Endorsement of the SRAP for West Asia held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in February 2000. The SRAP for West Asia contains the two major thematic networks (TN) that address (i) sustainable management of water resources in the agricultural sector (TN1) and (ii) sustainable management of vegetation cover (TN2). The partner organizations at various levels were identified and the roles of the UNCCD secretariat and the GM in facilitating implementation

of the SRAP for West Asia, were defined. The SRAP Management Committee meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in February/March 2001 to review implementation of the SRAP for West Asia, and the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) was invited to back up the implementation process as Regional Coordinator of the SRAP for West Asia.

117. Upon the initiative of the GM, the Interregional Programme for West Asia and North Africa (WANA) was adopted at the ministerial conference held in Rabat, Morocco, in June 2001. The WANA regional programme is expected to complement the SRAP for West Asia and subregional collaboration within the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in North Africa. A donor consultation meeting on this programme was held at the headquarters of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Aleppo, Syria, in March 2002, to discuss the financial arrangements for its implementation.

118. In Central Asia, it was decided at the ministerial meeting held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in June 2000, to prepare the SRAP to combat desertification in the Aral Sea basin. Various consultations have taken place for this purpose.

119. At the second meeting of the working group of NFPs held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in April 2001, with support from the German Government provided through the GTZ, the five priority areas of the SRAP were identified.

120. In North East Asia, yellow sand and dust storms have been inflicting disastrous damage in the subregion, disrupting land and air transport, hindering sunlight, causing ophthalmic and respiratory disorders and destroying homes, occasionally with fatal consequences for local people. The scale of this calamity has been growing at an alarming rate, and over the past years the countries in the subregion together with other partner countries and agencies have repeatedly underscored the need for concerted action at the national and subregional levels. Yellow sand and dust storm control was identified as a priority area of collaboration at the tripartite environment ministers meetings between China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The North-East Asian subregional programme of environmental cooperation (NEASPEC), which was developed under the auspices of ESCAP, also listed this subject as a priority area of subregional cooperation. In November 2001, a consortium of UN agencies launched a joint publication entitled "Global Alarm: Sand and Dust Storms from the World's Dryland" with a view to encouraging concerted action in this matter.

121. At Asia regional focal point meetings and at COPs over the past years, the Pacific island countries have been voicing their interest in developing subregional collaborative activities under the framework of the UNCCD. The Pacific island countries remain vulnerable to the effects of climatic variability, such as drought and the ENSO phenomenon. Pacific island workshops were held back-to-back in Apia, Samoa, with support from the Japanese Government and in collaboration with the secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), UNDP and FAO subregional offices. The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat provided useful inputs in exploring possible forms of subregional collaboration.

122. For South East Asia, the focal points proposed that concrete collaboration should be initiated at subregional level to promote UNCCD implementation. Pursuant to article 11 of the Convention, the countries in South East Asia prepared the outline of a subregional action programme on combating land degradation and eradicating poverty in dry, drought-prone and food-unsecured areas (SRAP for South East Asia). Most of these countries are in the final stages of adopting their NAPs and will soon start implementation. It is proposed to hold a subregional workshop to review the NAPs and their implementation process at the subregional level and, at the same time, to develop further the SRAP for South East Asia in collaboration with subregional organizations and other partner countries and organizations.

123. Similarly, the countries in South Asia have expressed their interest in, and underlined the potential benefits of subregional collaboration in combating desertification, rehabilitating degraded land and mitigating the effects of drought. In the light of the poverty prevalent in the subregion, countries emphasized that the nexus between poverty eradication and sustainable land management could be a major focus of the proposed subregional collaboration.

III. SYNTHESIS OF TRENDS FOR SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

124. Subregional programmes for UNCCD implementation generally reinforce the ecosystem approach for combating desertification, rehabilitating degraded land and mitigating the effects of drought. The SRAP for West Asia aims at improving the management of natural resources in ecosystems that are fairly homogeneous and interlinked at the subregional level. In Central Asia, the SRAP enables countries to enhance management of shared ecosystems in the Aral Sea basin. Yellow sand and dust storm control in North East Asia is derived from a similar approach used to rehabilitate degraded land in affected areas of China and Mongolia. Other subregions are taking the same approach to improve management of ecosystems that are fairly typical of each of the subregions in Asia.

125. Subregional collaboration is deemed effective in facilitating concerted action among neighbouring countries by taking advantage of shared language and cultural similarity. Using the same language in subregions enables the countries to pursue useful subregional collaboration cost-effectively, as transaction costs are minimized and the impact of activities is maximized.

126. Focusing on specific themes, the TPNs are designed to mobilize regionwide expertise on combating desertification, rehabilitating degraded land and mitigating the effects of drought, to catalyze public support and to forge partnerships. The TPNs are expected to maintain linkages and to generate synergies with NAP and SRAP implementation. They have common elements as well as their own particular focus.

127. One of the common elements of the TPNs in Asia is the mobilization of scientific and technical expertise on the specific theme selected for each TPN. The development and implementation of remote sensing and satellite data collection are a key subject under TPN1. The effective modalities, selection of suitable plant species, and the processing and marketing of agroforestry produce are the same for TPN2.

128. Information sharing is one of the driving forces of regional collaboration within the TPNs. Within each TPN, information networks have been proposed or decided upon. Their primary aim will be to link the participating institutes and experts. They will also be accessible to other potential partners inside and outside the region.

129. Capacity building is a central theme and one of the fundamental objectives of the TPNs. By participating in TPN activities, the participating experts and institutions are expected to build their capacities as they carry out specific research work and field activities.

130. In addtion, each TPN has a focus which is intended to add value by stimulating UNCCD implementation in Asia. The ongoing mapping of desertification, land degradation and land use change that will be consolidated into the Desertification Map of Asia under TPN1 is an important exercise for improving national planning of desertification control and land use enhancement. The agroforestry measures promoted under TPN2 are expected to provide local stakeholders with concrete incentives to foster soil conservation measures through integrated ecosystem management, to eradicate poverty through income-generating opportunities and to empower rural farmers through participatory and bottom-up land management activities. The aim of TPN3 is to develop concrete pilot projects for rangeland management and sand dune fixation through international partnership in selected participating countries.

131. One of the challenges facing the TPNs is how to enhance and maintain the operation of the network activities on a sustainable basis. The TPNs are expected to draw input from the participating countries and institutions and, in turn, return benefits to them. They should also step up interaction and feedback, so as to promote the dissemination of knowledge, know-how and the transfer of technologies. Capacity building of TPN focal institutes and task managers and participating institutions remains an essential task.

132. Resource mobilization and partnership building remain key elements in securing the successful operation of the TPNs. Identifying institutes and agencies which share the TPNs' common objectives and interests is a first step in this process. It would be particularly helpful if, through a partnership process, the TPNs' proposed work programmes could be upgraded to the stage at which networks would receive project funding from like-minded bilateral agencies, multilateral organizations or bodies. That is the aim of the catalytic support provided to existing TPNs by the GM.

IV. PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. West Asia

133. TN1, which promotes sustainable management of water resources in the agricultural sector, aims at (i) supporting development and implementation of the relevant national policies and strategies, (ii) promoting institutional mechanisms for these purposes, and (iii) developing pilot activities to test and develop innovative measures for water management and drought mitigation. TN2, which fosters sustainable management of vegetation cover, is also intended to achieve the objectives of TN1, while emphasizing information exchange. The Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), the Arab Organization for Agriculture Development (AOAD), the Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) and ICARDA were instrumental in developing the SRAP for West Asia, particularly its TNs. They are expected to bolster implementation in collaboration with other subregional organizations such as the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). The SRAP for West Asia called for the setting up of a management committee consisting of the NFPs of the participating country Parties in the subregion, the UNCCD secretariat, the GM and the UNDP/UNSO. It also required that a regional coordinator be recruited to facilitate SRAP implementation.

134. Implementation of the SRAP for West Asia was reviewed at the West Asia focal point meeting held in Kaslik, Lebanon, in February/March 2000. Participants highlighted the need to catalyze further assistance towards implementation, stressing that capacity building was essential in this respect. UNEP/ROWA, based in Bahrain, was designated subregional coordinator and invited to set up further partnerships with relevant organizations, to strengthen SRAP implementation.

135. The SRAP Management Committee meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 2001, focused on the TN programmes. ICARDA distributed the first draft of a questionnaire on TPN1 to NFPs and other partners. It was decided that ICARDA would finalize the questionnaire, taking into account the comments of the NFPs and partners, and take responsibility for distributing the final version. The response to the questionnaire would be the basis for developing a database on TN1. It was also decided that ICARDA and ACSAD would prepare, by 15 February 2002, the first draft proposals for concrete pilot projects for the TNs.

136. The GM assisted the process for developing the supplementary WANA programme. The ministerial meeting was held in Rabat, Morocco, in June 2001, where the regional programme for West Asia and North Africa was adopted. The donor consultation meeting on the development of a regional programme for sustainable development in rainfed areas in West Asia and North Africa was organized, at the initiative of the GM, at the headquarters of ICARDA in Aleppo, Syria, in March 2002. At this meeting it was decided to focus on national-level activities under the WANA regional programme, and ICARDA was requested to take on overall coordination as interim coordinator of the WANA regional programme. Regarding the financing of the WANA regional programme,

it was agreed that the GM with the support of the World Bank, would provide grant assistance to enable ICARDA to begin start-up activities. It was also agreed that individual countries could seek grant assistance from the World Bank, the Fund for International Development of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC Fund) and the UNDP Drylands Development Centre (formerly UNDP/UNSO) by submitting project proposals.

2. Central Asia

137. The ministerial meeting held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in June 2000 called for preparation of a SRAP for Central Asia. It was proposed that the SRAP for Central Asia should be an integral part of countries' national policies for sustainable development and should be harmonized with NAPs and relevant national policies for improving the ecological situation in the Aral Sea basin.

138. At the second meeting of the working group on the SRAP in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in April 2001, five priority areas were agreed upon. They are: (i) monitoring, assessment of desertification processes and environmental impact assessment, (ii) improving the use of water in agriculture; combating erosion, salinization and swamp formation (iii) agroforestry and forest resources management on the plains and in the mountains; watershed management, (v) rangeland management, and (vi) nature and biodiversity conservation; eco-tourism development. It was also agreed to include as a priority area the "establishment of an early warning system for drought and drought mitigation".

139. Participants stressed that preparation of pilot projects for each Central Asian country should be started as soon as possible, in parallel with the process of preparing the SRAP for Central Asia. They recommended starting preparation of pilot projects: in Kazakhstan under priority area (iv), in Kyrgyzstan under priority areas (iii) and (v), in Tajikistan under priority area (ii), in Turkmenistan under the priority area "Agrobiodiversity conservation and nature protection, eco-tourism development", and in Uzbekistan under the priority area "establishment of an early warning system for drought and drought mitigation". The working group underlined the importance of ensuring adequate NGO participation in the preparation of the SRAP for Central Asia.

3. North East Asia

140. China and Mongolia have stepped up their national consultations and collaboration with other partner countries to facilitate preparation of the subregional collaborative activities. They would consist of the national activities for China and Mongolia with subregional and international collaboration. A stakeholder meeting was held in Beijing, China, from 13 to 15 May 2002, to discuss a possible framework for such activities. It was proposed that the aim should be to (i) assess the root causes of yellow sand and dust storms and their impact in North East Asia with a view to developing approaches to control land degradation, (ii) examine and compare the effectiveness and impact of preventive and rehabilitation measures including the use of advanced technology and innovative schemes and traditional

knowledge and practices, (iii) restore degraded land by tackling soil erosion, denuded land and gully land through innovative community-based pilot demonstration activities, (iv) promote alternative approaches by tackling yellow sand and dust storms and desertification, including integration of indigenous knowledge and local practices, (v) building human and institutional capacity for predicting, mitigating and controlling yellow sand and dust storms, including training and public awareness at community level, (vi) developing a subregional mechanism to enhance monitoring, information sharing, and to promote pilot projects and capacity building, and (vii) building disaster preparedness, management and mitigation strategies for yellow sand and dust storms.

4. Pacific island countries

141. At the Pacific island workshop on combating land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought held in Apia, Samoa, in May 2001, participants examined the common concerns of the Pacific island countries in promoting sustainable land management and mitigating the effects of drought. The following aspects were highlighted as major challenges for UNCCD implementation by the Pacific island countries: (i) developing watershed and water resource management measures to overcome the present shortcomings and deficiencies in water storage, irrigation, rain water harvesting, water catchment facilities, infrastructures and water supply and sanitation schemes, (ii) strengthening the institutional capacities of governments, research institutes and farmers' associations, and building capacities of local and national stakeholders, (iii) identifying and disseminating technologies suitable for and/or effective in promoting water catchment and natural resource management, with due attention to traditional knowledge and the transfer of appropriate technology, (iv) enlarging the information network on drought mitigation and land degradation control measures across the islands, and (v) transboundary, subregional and regional collaboration in order to synchronize and upscale efforts to mitigate drought and combat land degradation. With a view to tackling these challenges, participants adopted the Chairman's Summary, which proposed elaboration of a subregional initiative on early warning systems for forecasting drought and its impacts, and another on agroforestry and water harvesting. It was suggested that partnerships be set up and resources mobilized for these initiatives.

142. Following the aforementioned workshop, a Pacific island workshop on integrating priority activities relating to combating land degradation and mitigating drought into the ACP-EU partnership agreement, was held in Apia, Samoa, in May 2001. Participants examined the compatibility of UNCCD implementation with the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement. They adopted a number of recommendations in this respect and reaffirmed their intention to reinforce coordination between the UNCCD NFPs and the authorizing officers of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreements with a view to integrating priority measures for combating land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought into the Country Support Strategies (CSS) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) developed under the ACP-EU Agreement.

143. An outline was prepared for a SRAP for South East Asia. The objectives proposed included: (i) preventing land degradation and rehabilitation of degraded land, (ii) enhancing drought preparedness and mitigating its impacts, (iii) improving and restoring watersheds, (iv) improving community livelihoods, (v) enhancing productivity of land-based resources, (vi) promoting sustainable land use management, (vii) preventing and/or controlling forest fires and haze, (viii) promoting the participation and capacity building of local communities. To achieve these objectives, a subregional workshop is proposed, aimed at (i) building capacity of stakeholders, (ii) reviewing national action plans, (iii) developing the SRAP for South East Asia, (iv) assessing successful practices, (v) raising awareness of the need to combat the effects of land degradation and drought in order to prevent desertification within the subregion, (vi) identifying financial requirements, (vii) fostering partnership building and resource mobilization with potential donors.

144. In proposing to pursue subregional collaboration, countries in South Asia underscored the importance of collaborating with existing subregional organizations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP). These subregional organizations do not have a programme specifically focused on desertification, land degradation and drought issues. However, it was suggested that they would provide a useful framework for developing subregional collaborative activities in the areas concerned. The countries of the subregion are continuing their consultations on this matter.

V. PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

145. With a view to facilitating implementation of the work programmes for the Asia regional thematic programme network on desertification monitoring and assessment (TPN1), a TPN1 workshop was held at the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo, Japan, in June 2000. The workshop was hosted by the Government of Japan and UNU with the co-sponsorship of the Environment Agency of Japan and IFAD. At the workshop, experts from participating countries presented their work on monitoring and assessment of desertification, land degradation, land use change, drought and the impacts at local, national and subregional levels. In order to further preparation of the Asia status report on desertification monitoring and assessment and a desertification map of Asia, it was agreed to promote (i) harmonization of collective data management, (ii) standardization of thematic data, (iii) field observation and sampling, (iv) development of models for desertification and (v) the TPN1 information network system. Capacity building, resource mobilization and partnership arrangements were identified as cross-cutting themes. With a view to attaining concrete achievements in these areas, participants suggested (i) joint research programmes, (ii) advanced training, (iii) awareness campaigns, (iv) strengthening the network of research institutes, and (v) stepping up institutional collaboration among relevant international organizations, national and subregional institutes and agencies.

146. In order to advance the work of TPN1, a task group meeting on benchmarks and indicators was held at the Chinese Academy of Forestry in Beijing, China, in November 2001. Participants noted that the benchmarks and indicators listed in ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1 were designed mainly for the purpose of monitoring implementation of the Convention and pointed to the need to develop them further to facilitate objective assessment of the state of desertification through mapping or other means. They also stressed that it would be essential to work out a common set of benchmarks and indicators for use in the region and at the global level. Participants reviewed the characteristics of various indicators such as (i) pressure indicators which highlight natural and man-made biophysical phenomena that affect the status of natural resources and could lead to desertification, (ii) state indicators that focus on the status of natural resources, (iii) desertification impact indicators that are to be used to evaluate the effects of desertification on human beings and the environment, and (iv) implementation indicators that are to be used to assess action taken to combat desertification and assess its impact on natural resources and human beings. Regarding the technical aspects of preparing the regional map on desertification, a scale was suggested of 1: 2.5-5 million at the regional level and 1: 250,000/500,000 at the national level. It was also suggested that the classification system should be a four-level hierarchical system that would include level 1: agro-climatic region, level 2: land use, level 3: degradation process, level 4: severity of degradation. It was also proposed that the composition and format of the map should be decided at a later stage, with a view to harmonizing it.

147. In order to carry forward implementation of the Asia regional thematic programme network on agroforestry and soil conservation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas (TPN2), a first TPN2 workshop was held at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, India, in December 2001. The Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and the UNCCD secretariat organized the workshop in collaboration with the Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI), Jodhpur, India, and the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA), Hyderabad, India, and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The Government of Germany and the GM co-sponsored the workshop. Participants had intensive discussions on the overall framework of TPN2, regional and country case studies on agroforestry, and soil conservation practices and techniques in dryland and/or degraded land areas. They also considered the policy and research gaps in those areas, resource mobilization and partnership building and the TPN2 information network development. The topics specifically addressed by the working groups were (i) multiple benefits of agroforestry and soil conservation, (ii) promotion of the participatory approach and strengthening of the stakeholders' network, (iii) resource mobilization and partnership building, and (iv) key areas and elements for refining and finalizing the regional study on dryland agroforestry and soil conservation. Workshop participants made numerous suggestions for reinforcing agroforestry and soil conservation activities in dry land and degraded land. They suggested, for instance, gearing agroforestry more towards incentive-oriented land management and soil conservation schemes by focusing on (i) aromatic and medicinal plants, (ii) floriculture and fruit crops and (iii) on-farm post-harvest product processing, and (iv) crops to generate incomes for rural farmers.

Participants also recommended early start-up of the TPN2 information network, called "TPN2 InfoNet", to be centred at CAZRI, the TPN2 task institute. Participants requested the network host country, institute, task manager, UNCCD secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with other partners, to take steps towards securing the resources required to carry out the TPN2 activities.

148. The regional thematic programme network on rangeland management and sand dune fixation (TPN3) was officially launched in Yazd, Islamic Republic of Iran, in May 2001. Network member countries, task managers of other Asia regional TPNs, and agencies and organizations such as the GM, FAO, ACSAD and ICARDA, and other experts and NGOs attended the meeting. The Forest and Range Organization of Iran was designated as a focal institute for TPN3. Participants agreed at the meeting on the following: (i) establishing a secretariat for TPN3, (ii) capacity building for TPN3 secretariat staff, (iii) constructing a web site and national and regional information networks, (iv) establishing a databank, (v) exchanging information under the TPN3 network, (vi) identifying critical areas in each ecological zone, (vii) selecting representative sample areas in these zones, and the most bio-physically and socioeconomically appropriate range management research and systems for the sample areas. In order to make further progress on TPN3, it was suggested that a workshop be convened at the end of 2001, or early in 2002, to discuss rangeland and desertification problems faced in participating countries and to agree on appropriate uniform systems for classifying and collecting data and on the tasks to be carried out by each country. The Government of Iran pledged support for TPN3 in the form of financial assistance amounting to US$ 170,000 for the project office (known as the TPN3 secretariat) over the next five years.

149. It is planned to launch the Asia regional thematic programme network on water resource management for agriculture in dryland (TPN4) in Damascus, Syria, in July 2002. It is proposed that the Ministry of Irrigation of the Syrian Arab Republic should be a focal institute for TPN4, and the required preparations are being made. The UNCCD secretariat assisted the Ministry of Irrigation in undertaking national needs assessment on water resource management for dryland agriculture in selected countries in Asia. In the ongoing preparation, it is suggested that the programme activities for the network should be (i) consolidating existing knowledge, both from within and outside the region, on the management and sustainable use of marginal water resources and saline soils for agricultural production, (ii) establishing links among researchers and practitioners to foster synergism in the development and application of innovative technologies used to manage water resources and saline soils for agricultural production; (iii) contributing to capacity building and strengthening the ability of government research and service agencies throughout the region in the crucial area of water resources and soil management in arid land agriculture; (iv) establishing a monitoring system to assess the long-term effects on soils of marginal water use; (v) encouraging the participation of the private sector in promoting technologies proven to meet the objective of water resource conservation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid lands; and (vi) developing mechanisms for pricing water use and establishment of conflict resolution mechanisms for water use.

150. It is proposed that the Asia regional thematic programme network on building capacities for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought (TPN5) should be launched in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, in 2002, and the necessary preparations are being made. The Mongolian Ministry of Nature and Environment, as TPN5 host, has been consulting with national stakeholders and international partners on this. It is proposed to convene a preparatory workshop on TPN5 prior to the launch meeting. It is proposed that TPN5 should aim at (i) reviewing the capacity building activities in the areas of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, (ii) taking stock of subregional, regional and international activities for developing human resources, institutional capacities and networks, (iii) discussing, and seeking consensus on, the framework and priority activities of the proposed TPN5, (iv) designing the prototype schemes for building the capacities of national stakeholders, and (v) reviewing the design of the TPN5 information system (web site).

151. The Ministry of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development of Pakistan has been undertaking consultations with Pakistani national institutes, stakeholders, NGOs and international partners to facilitate the preparation and launching of the Asia regional thematic programme network on local area development initiatives (TPN6) in 2003.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

152. The following conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from the review of progress made on the SRAPs and RAPs.

153. It appears that capacity building is called for in networking practices, information management and knowledge dissemination. In fact, each TPN has a component for mobilizing grass-roots public involvement, for instance in field sampling and land survey under TPN1, and in pilot field projects on agroforestry on drylands under TPN2. The issue at stake is how to bridge the gap between network members and other national and local practitioners and stakeholders so as to share techniques and expertise and enhance the effectiveness of their activities. Outreach initiatives under the TPNs may be essential to increase the effective involvement of civil society. The intermediaries of the institutions participating in the networks must be proactive in disseminating information on TPN activities and empowering national stakeholders to undertake activities using some of the techniques and expertise that have been tried and tested by other network member countries or institutions. For instance, TPN2 proposed preparation of a handbook on dryland agroforestry for use by local and national stakeholders. TPN5 is specifically designed to encourage public involvement and empower national stakeholders to undertake desertification control and drought-mitigating activities.

154. The institutional set-up supporting the RAP must be firmed up. The TPN host countries have designated TPN host institutes run by TPN task managers. They have made commendable efforts to equip the task managers with staff and a budget. The TPN participating countries have also designated TPN focal institutions that are expected to coordinate information sharing at national level in each network member country. Some participating countries are

represented in the TPNs by government agencies on a provisional basis, until they have identified suitable national research institutes. It is deemed essential that network member countries designate appropriate national TPN focal institutes and create networks at national level.

155. The medium to longer term predictability of programme development under the TPNs has yet to be secured. For TPN3, a host country has pledged a specific amount of financial assistance. The host countries of the other TPNs have allocated resources to enhance the institutional capacity of the network host institutes. However, the networks still lack the resources to operate the activities identified under the TPN work programmes. Potential partnerships seem to be emerging in some cases, but resource mobilization and partnership development remain a crucial challenge for all the TPNs.

156. The TPNs' potential for synergistic development between UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD must gradually be more fully tapped. For instance, dryland biodiversity conservation and sustainable management is an underlying theme of TPN2 and it is also the central element of the biodiversity conservation plans of actions prepared by countries for implementation of the CBD. TPN1 activities are also related to the monitoring of meteorological, terrestrial and oceanographic conditions undertaken in connection with work relating to climate change under the UNFCCC. Through integrated ecosystem management supported under TPN2, microclimates created by enhanced vegetation and forest cover and water resource management could contribute to mitigating climate change. International cooperative programmes on dryland biodiversity and climate change mitigation have evolved rapidly in recent years, and the TPN host institutes, focal institutes and other stakeholders need to stay up to date on such developments so they can benefit from supporting programmes or schemes that could assist in promoting synergistic implementation of the multilateral environmental conventions. TPN workshops would be useful opportunities to review progress on synergy.

157. Better synchronized TPN work plans would make a long-term contribution to the management of drylands ecosystems in the Asia region. For instance, TPN1 is intended to cultivate linkages between desertification monitoring and early warning systems. Such endeavours must be supported by proper institutional collaboration at national level to provide input to the activities of TPN1. The monitoring component of yellow sand and dust storm control in the emerging subregional collaboration in North East Asia is a case in point. It would be an interesting case study to address the nexus between desertification monitoring and early warning systems in accordance with the recommendations adopted by the CST and the TPN1 work programmes. TPN2 is aimed at promoting concrete measures for rehabilitating degraded lands through enhanced silvo-agroforestry and water harvesting in the drylands. Enhanced vegetation and forest cover planned under TPN2 would increase drought preparedness, while measures planned under TPN3 would reduce the vulnerability of pastoralists and herders. To the extent that it relates to water harvesting for rehabilitating degraded land, TPN4 would assist in scarce water conservation and recycling. The focus on drought preparedness under TPN5 and on participatory natural resources management under TPN6 is meant to complete the Parties' structured response to the need for regional cooperation.

158. Monitoring and assessment tools should be better integrated into proper analysis and planning of prescriptive measures. Their application should help the overall efforts to combat desertification, rehabilitate degraded land, mitigate the effects of drought and promote sustainable land management. TPN1 is expected to help gradually to improve the quality of work relating to desertification monitoring and assessment for the benefit of all Asian Parties. At the national level, human-resource development and institutional capacity building are the key elements in this regard.

159. Linkages between the TPNs and the work of the CST must be strengthened. Elements of technology, knowledge and know-how run throughout all the TPNs. Remote sensing and satellite data collection is one example. Techniques for processing agroforestry produce are another. Advanced technologies and techniques are required to expand the industrial or commercial use of biomass produced by dryland agroforestry. While traditional knowledge and practices play an important role, advanced engineering and technologies are also essential in enhancing water resource management for dryland agriculture. The involvement of the private sector is essential, in the long run, to progress in this respect. The TPNs would certainly help stakeholders to share their expertise and create an environment conducive to private-sector work throughout the region.

160. In order to take stock of progress made on regional cooperation under the UNCCD in Asia since the last ministerial conference of Asian Parties held in Beijing in 1997, Asian Parties may wish to consider options for the further development of the RAP, during the CRIC process.

Annex I

LIST OF COUNTRY PARTIES HAVING SUBMITTED THEIR NATIONAL REPORT

Country Party	Date of ratification	Date of submission of national report
1. Bangladesh	26/01/1996	03/05/02
2. Cambodia	08/08/1997	29/04/02
3. China	18/02/1997	29/04/02
4. India	17/12/1996	02/05/02
5. Indonesia	31/08/1998	30/04/02
6. Jordan	21/10/1995	21/04/02
7. Kazakhstan	09/07/1997	24/04/02
8. Kuwait	27/06/1997	06/05/02
9. Kyrgyzstan	19/09/1997	15/04/02
10. Lao PDR	20/09/1996	01/05/02
11. Lebanon	16/05/1996	26/05/02
12. Mongolia	03/09/1996	30/04/02
13. Myanmar	02/01/1997	30/04/02
14. Nepal	15/10/1995	29/04/02
15. Niue	12/08/1998	30/04/02
16. Pakistan	24/02/1997	02/05/02
17. Palau	15/06/1999	26/04/02
18. Philippines	10/02/2000	26/04/02
19. Qatar	15/09/1999	28/04/02
20. Saudi Arabia	25/06/1997	06/05/02
21. Sri Lanka	09/12/1998	03/05/02
22. Syrian Arab Republic	10/06/1997	01/05/02
23. Tajikistan	16/07/1997	15/04/02
24. Thailand*	07/03/2001	24/04/02
25. Turkmenistan	18/09/1996	26/04/02
26. Tuvalu*	14/09/1998	29/04/02
27. United Arab Emirates	21/10/1998	13/05/02
28. Uzbekistan	31/10/1995	26/04/02
29. Viet Nam	25/08/1998	26/04/02
30. Yemen	14/01/1997	08/05/02

* Country Parties which did not submit a first national report.

Annex II

STATUS OF ACTION PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL FORUMS/WORKSHOPS

Countries	Status of NAP preparation		NAP prepared	Workshop on NAP	NCB/NFP		Financial allocation	Needs expressed[1]
	To be prepared	Being prepared			NCB established	NFP designated		
Bahrain			√ (1992)		Being established	√	Government funds	√
Bangladesh		√		√	To be established	√	Government funds; external assistance	√
Cambodia	?				?	√	Collaboration with international agencies	√
China			√[2]		√	√	Central, province and local government financing; external assistance	√
Fiji[3]	√					√	Indirect funding allocation	√
India			√		√	√	National/ State budgets; external assistance	√
Indonesia		√		√	√	√	?	√
Iran (Islamic Republic of)			√(2002)		√	√	National budget; investments from private sector/ local communities	√
Jordan			√[4] (1987)		√	√	Government funds; external assistance	√
Kazakhstan			√ (1997) 2002 (revised)		√	√	National/local budgets; funds from nature users; external assistance	√
Kuwait		√			√	√	Government annual budget	√
Kyrgyzstan			√(2000)		√	√	National budget; external assistance	√
Laos			Integrated with the national priority programme		√	√		√

Countries	Status of NAP preparation		NAP prepared	Workshop on NAP	NCB/NFP		Financial allocation	Needs expressed[1]
	To be prepared	Being prepared			NCB established	NFP designated		
Lebanon	√				√	√	Limited funds; external assistance	√
Mongolia			√ (1996)		√	√	State and local budgets; revenue from natural resources use fees; external assistance	√
Myanmar		Being revised	√ Greening Programme (1993)		√	√	National efforts; collaboration with multilateral, bilateral and UN agencies	√
Nepal		√		√	√	√	National budgets; external assistance	√
Oman			√		√	√	Mostly from government	√
Pakistan			√ (2001)		√	√	National and provincial funds; funds raised by community organizations; external assistance	√
Palau[3]	√				To be established	√	A budget has yet to be developed	√
Papua New Guinea				√				
Philippines	√				√	√	National funding	
Qatar	√				To be established	√	Annual national budget	√
Republic of Korea	?	?	?		?	√	Government funds	?
Saudi Arabia		√			√	√	Government budgets; no external assistance so far	√
Singapore[3]		Being revised	Greening Programme (since 1960s)				Government funds	

Countries	Status of NAP preparation		NAP prepared	Workshop on NAP	NCB/NFP		Financial allocation	Needs expressed[1]
	To be prepared	Being prepared			NCB established	NFP designated		
Sri Lanka		√		√		√	Collaboration with multilateral, bilateral and UN agencies	√
Syrian Arab Republic		√[4]	√ (1995)	√	√	√	National funding; external assistance	√
Tajikistan			√ (2001)		√	√	National budget; external assistance	√
Thailand			Relevant policies			√	National funding	
Turkmenistan			√ (1996)		√	√	Some funds allocation is envisaged; external assistance	√
United Arab Emirates			√ (1995)		To be established	√	?	√
Uzbekistan			√ (1999)		√	√	National budget; external assistance	√
Viet Nam	√		Included in NAP	√	√	√	Government annual financial plan; funds from NGOs and domestic enterprises; external assistance	√
Yemen			√ (1990) updated version (2000)		√	√	Government funds; external assistance	√

Notes:

A question mark (?) in any cell implies that no specific information is provided. Whether or not a NAP has been prepared, all reporting Parties have existing environmental or sectoral strategies, policies, legal instruments and programmes to deal with desertification and land degradation.

1 Financial, technical, technological and/or capacity-building needs.
2 Based on a long history of combating desertification, especially since the 1950s.
3 Not directly affected by desertification.
4 New NAP.

- - - - -

UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/CRIC(1)/4
3 June 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
First session
18-29 November 2002
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPH 2(A) AND (B), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION BY AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

Note by the secretariat

1. Pursuant to article 22, paragraph 2(a) and (b), and article 26 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Conference of the Parties (COP) shall review the implementation of the Convention and its institutional arrangements. By its decision 1/COP.5, the COP decided to establish a committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as a subsidiary body of the COP to assist it in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention, and to adopt the terms of reference of the CRIC as contained in the annex to that decision. The COP also decided that the first session of the CRIC should review updates to reports already available and/or new reports and that the review should focus on specific thematic topics.

2. In accordance with the same decision, the secretariat has prepared a synthesis and preliminary analysis of these reports, setting out the trends emerging in the implementation of the Convention. A synthesis and preliminary analysis of reports submitted by affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties are contained in ICCD/CRIC(1)/4/Add.1.

3. In accordance with decision 11/COP.1, the secretariat has compiled summaries of the reports. The summaries of reports from affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties are contained in ICCD/CRIC(1)/4/Add.2.

4. Decision 1/COP.5 also requests the secretariat to take advantage of its ongoing activities at the regional and/or subregional levels to disseminate information stemming from its preliminary analysis and seek to obtain feedback with a view to enriching the Committee's work base. The regional and subregional feedback obtained at a meeting organized for the Latin American and Caribbean region from 29 July to 1 August 2002 in Bridgetown, Barbados, is presented in ICCD/CRIC(1)/4/Add.3.

- - - - -

UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/CRIC(1)/4/Add.1
18 June 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
First session
18-29 November 2002
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPH 2(A) AND (B), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION BY AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

SYNTHESIS AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN REPORTS SUBMITTED BY AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES, AND PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Note by the secretariat

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
PART ONE			
SYNTHESIS AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES		1 - 92	4
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 10	4
II.	OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL REPORTS AND EMERGING TRENDS	11 - 24	5
III.	SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS	25 - 67	7
A.	Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations	28 - 38	7
B.	Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements	39 - 45	9

		Paragraphs	Page
C.	Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements	46 - 50	10
D.	Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies	51 - 54	11
E.	Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought	55 - 60	11
F.	Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment	61 - 65	12
G.	Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how	66 - 67	13
IV.	LESSONS LEARNED	68 - 83	13
A.	Lessons from the national action programme formulation and implementation process	68 - 80	13
B.	Lessons from the reporting system	81 - 83	15
V.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	84 - 92	16

PART TWO

PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN		93 - 189	18
I.	INTRODUCTION	93	18
II.	BACKGROUND	94 - 101	18
III.	SYNTHESIS OF TRENDS CONCERNING SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES	102 - 104	19
IV.	PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES	105 - 136	20
A.	Subregional action programme for the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco Americano	105 - 109	20
B.	Subregional action programme for the sustainable development of the Puna Americana	110 - 117	21
C.	Subregional action programme in Mesoamerica	118 - 127	23
D.	Hispaniola subregional action programme	128 - 132	25
E.	Integration of priority activities to combat desertification within the framework of the ACP/EU Partnership Agreement	133 - 136	25

		Paragraphs	Page
V.	PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME	137 - 162	26
	A. Benchmarks and indicators for monitoring desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean	138 - 142	26
	B. Desertification information network for the LAC region	143 - 150	27
	C. Integrated watershed management in Latin America and the Caribbean	151 - 156	29
	D. Interregional platform of cooperation between Africa and LAC	157 - 162	30
VI.	CONCLUSIONS	163 - 189	31
	A. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations	165 - 169	31
	B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements	170 - 172	32
	C. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements	173 - 176	32
	D. Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies	177 - 180	33
	E. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought	181 - 183	34
	F. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment	184 - 186	34
	G. Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how	187 - 189	35

Annexes

I. List of country Parties having submitted their national reports 36
II. Status of action programmes and national forums/workshops 37

Part One

SYNTHESIS AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with article 26, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), "each Party shall communicate to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its ordinary sessions, through the Permanent Secretariat, reports on the measures which it has taken for the implementation of the Convention".

2. The format and content of the national reports are specified in decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 10(a). In collaboration with several United Nations agencies, the UNCCD secretariat prepared a Help Guide (ICCD/COP(3)/INF.3) designed to provide a common format, practical recommendations and support for the preparation of national reports.

3. The first national reports of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) country Parties were prepared at the beginning of 2000 for review at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP).

4. The first synthesis (ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.2(D)) was based on national reports received from 30 country Parties of LAC, exactly the number of countries that had ratified the Convention at that time. The reports highlighted important progress in, as well as significant constraints on, the implementation of the Convention in the region.

5. The first reporting process stressed that the most important set of problems affecting countries of the region were based on anthropogenic activities, namely: deforestation, water pollution and inappropriate agricultural practices. Human activities generate negative environmental, social, economic and financial impacts. Poverty eradication, as a cause or effect of land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, is considered to be the priority in combating desertification.

6. To tackle these problems, countries have been formulating and adopting laws and policies to facilitate implementation of programmes and to develop projects dealing with several environmental issues. The process of institution building, especially in the last four years, has been helping countries to incorporate the implementation of the Convention into their environmental framework. Statistics show that 53 per cent of countries had ratified the Convention in 1997. At the beginning of 2001, this number had increased to 91 per cent and to-date all the LAC countries have signed and/or ratified the Convention.

7. From an institutional point of view, important advances were noted in the implementation of the Convention. At the time of the first reporting exercise, almost all the country Parties had their national coordinating bodies (NCBs) in place, but some of them were not operational. The focal points had been appointed, and all country Parties had been adopting

political and legal measures to consolidate the process of implementing the Convention.

8. However, the political and institutional measures and the above-mentioned progress were not enough to combat desertification and drought; the need to include desertification and drought in governments' national agendas was stressed.

9. The users of natural resources did not have access to basic knowledge and/or appropriate technologies to manage natural resources better, owing to the lack of efficient mechanisms for disseminating knowledge and information technologies to countries.

10. The participatory process for the preparation of national action programmes (NAPs) can be positively evaluated. All country Parties, particularly those at an advanced stage in the formulation of their NAPs, report on measures that include the participation of civil society, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women's associations in the consultative process for NAP formulation and in the formulation and implementation of projects at local level.

II. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL REPORTS AND EMERGING TRENDS

11. The second reporting exercise of the LAC countries reveals differences compared with the first reports. At the beginning of 2000, countries were compiling information on all activities implemented to combat desertification, including activities carried out before the signing of the Convention. It was a four-year compilation exercise. The main objective of the second national report was to update information from 2000 and 2001. However, the majority of reports record the history of implementation of the Convention in their countries, combining information on the period before the first reporting exercise with information that should be taken into account in the second reporting exercise. In many cases, it is not clear to which period the information relates.

12. In 2002, with all 33 LAC countries having signed and/or ratified the Convention and all eligible countries having received financial support for the preparation of their reports, 28 reports were submitted within the required deadline.

13. Most of the reports stress macro-economic and policy difficulties in the majority of countries, which determine the priorities set at national level. The current economic and fiscal crisis which some LAC countries are undergoing, limits their financial capacity to implement environment policies and measures. Some reports state that in spite of far-reaching economic adjustments and reforms, the issues were still included as national priorities for development. Nevertheless, the agendas of those countries remain largely "economic", and there is not sufficient awareness of the linkages between the promotion of policies and measures to combat desertification and drought, and economic development.

14. Some reports make the point that the above-mentioned factors (fiscal crisis and the economic impact on policies) apply more to regions prone to drought and desertification than anywhere else. In dry regions, economic, environmental and social vulnerability is particularly high and appropriate measures cannot be taken owing to lack of financial resources. This situation is getting worse in a context of accelerating climate change and economic hardship. This is further threatening the livelihoods of local populations.

15. Political changes are also mentioned in a number of reports as constraints on the implementation of the Convention and the efficacy of the focal points. The high turnover of national focal points is a further constraint on UNCCD implementation.

16. Most of the reports mention the financial aspect explicitly as the crucial constraint on implementation of the Convention. They highlight the lack of effective mechanisms for funding policies to combat desertification and drought in the region. NCBs lack adequate funding and do not have a strong standing in the adoption and implementation of decisions relating to the Convention. Reports mention that the Convention and national policies to combat desertification, land degradation and drought could attract more attention if more funds were allocated through international cooperation.

17. Priority issues of countries can be divided into two groups. On the one hand, incorporation of UNCCD objectives into national and sectoral policies is still considered to be important. Substantial efforts have been made in this direction, for example some Caribbean countries have taken steps to identify and set in place a common framework for issues relating to drought, coastal erosion and soil degradation within their environmental agendas. They are also making efforts to incorporate the principles of the Convention into their legal and institutional frameworks and to create a policy environment conducive to the generation of synergies.

18. On the other hand, in other countries desertification has a major social and economic impact. For the countries that have already formulated their NAPs, the Convention is currently in a new stage of implementation. Local actions such as the restoration of degraded lands, promotion of water management at watershed or micro-basin level, collection and application of traditional knowledge and technologies, and financing small projects for land users are the main priorities.

19. From an economic point of view, a new issue has emerged in some reports relating to the attribution of value to services performed by natural resources. The terrestrial bio-productive system and other natural resources perform an environmental service that should be included in a payment system and/or mechanism. This payment system and/or mechanism would contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and the control of land degradation.

20. All reports mention the relevance of the participatory process to the effective implementation of the Convention. The involvement of civil society organizations in this process has resulted in cooperation among them that can be expanded and strengthened.

21. Another aspect calling for attention is the direct participation of local populations in the process of formulating and implementing environmental and development policies. Special mention should be given to the Aymara Parliament where indigenous peoples are discussing, among others matters, how to combat desertification.

22. Indicators to assess and monitor desertification and drought processes are generally given little coverage in the reports. The majority of countries do not have adequate resources for this task.

23. Traditional knowledge is mentioned in some reports. Efforts have been and are being made to compile indigenous technologies and knowledge, however nothing is said about assessing their applicability in the context of a modern economy. "Zero tillage traditional technology" and "biomass growth" are mentioned as alternatives to profit-driven agriculture by some countries.

24. Gender issues were considered in only a few reports. This can be explained by the fact that gender issues were covered in the first reporting exercise.

III. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS

25. LAC countries perceive the implementation of the Convention as part of the solution to their environment-related problems. The majority of LAC country Parties mention in their reports that they do not have predictable financial resources, adequate human resources, an institutional and legal framework and the necessary technological capacity.

26. Eighteen per cent of reports mention that the LAC region is facing severe economic constraints, financial crisis and structural adjustments. As a result, the financing of national policies, in particular those relating to the environment, is in crisis. This trend is expected to continue and spread to other countries.

27. LAC countries are affected by land degradation, desertification, coastal erosion, drought and natural disasters on a significant scale; they also have a backlog of environmental and social problems and overcoming them will require enormous financial, institutional and technical efforts. This situation shows that the LAC countries are neither a "green region" nor a "nature paradise", as is often claimed.

A. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations

28. Several approaches to the participatory process are mentioned in the reports. All of them stress its importance for the success of the implementation of the Convention. This fact shows the willingness of

countries to encourage participation by different civil society actors, such as NGOs, community-based organizations, the scientific community, the private sector and various associations, in the implementation of the Convention.

29. All countries are seeking opportunities to stimulate the participation of all major stakeholders in achieving sustainable results. Campaigns have been organized and "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought" (17 June) celebrated in different countries to increase public awareness. Some countries of the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS) used awareness campaigns to define their NAP priorities.

30. Similarly, the preparation of the reports was an opportunity to mobilize institutions and civil society in the region. Ninety-four per cent of country Parties organized meetings at national level to validate their reports.

31. Civil society actors have made an important contribution to launching NAPs in some countries where no action had been initiated to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. Awareness campaigns in various sectors of civil society have contributed to identifying problems and priorities. In some cases, the process has advanced and, as a result, NAPs are drafted and waiting to be approved.

32. Another aspect of the participatory process was that NGOs and community-based organizations defined priority investments in affected areas. Fourteen per cent of reports mention that various stakeholders have contributed directly to the design of projects and to the identification of financial resources. These organizations are already able to access financial resources for project implementation. One country has a financial mechanism exclusively for NGOs and community-based organizations.

33. The participation of indigenous communities in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought was stressed in 11 per cent of reports. In particular, the Aymara Parliament, created within the context of the Puna Americana subregional action programme, has been involved in a number of issues relating to the implementation of the Convention and poverty eradication.

34. The participatory process at the community level is also playing a role in data collection and the monitoring of natural resource management. One country reports the participation of local communities in the selection and use of indicators for the preparation of environmental diagnosis. A capacity-building process for local communities is taking place in view of the impact of their activities on land degradation, water resources, forestry management, etc.

35. Thirty per cent of reports mention the important contribution the International NGO Network on Desertification and Drought (RIOD) makes towards implementation of the Convention.

36. The gender issue is mentioned in 26 per cent of reports. Some countries make general comments; only one country has taken specific measures to facilitate and improve women's participation in the implementation of the Convention and environmental policies.

37. Finally, one of the reports mentions a conceptual problem relating to the format of the participatory process and to the linkage with synergy and efficiency concepts. This process can be enhanced through more effective coordination of community involvement.

38. Forty-five per cent of the reports submitted stress that the progress made in the participatory process has made an effective contribution to the various aspects mentioned above.

B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

39. Forty-eight per cent of reporting country Parties mention that progress has been made on legislative and institutional frameworks, in three main directions: (i) formulation of legislation in areas relating to desertification, such as forest and water resources, (ii) legal reforms aimed at facilitating coherent policies and regulations to combat desertification and drought, and (iii) laws and regulations on the use of natural resources, and their enforcement.

40. Fifteen per cent of reports mention new laws on forests and land degradation. These legal instruments have been adopted or are in the process of being adopted by the respective parliaments. Another 12 per cent of reports mention the progress achieved in ensuring proper enforcement of existing laws and regulations, such as zoning, taxes and other obligations relating to forestry management.

41. The St. George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS has had an important political and institutional impact in the East Caribbean countries by promoting legal and institutional reforms to harmonize and strengthen the environmental sector and identifying land degradation, drought and coastal erosion as key issues. In the same way, the Tegucigalpa Protocol of the Central American Commission for Development and Environment (CCAD) was signed by Central American countries to promote a common approach to tackling environmental issues, including desertification and drought through a desertification and drought committee composed of national focal points.

42. Six countries in the region have had their NAPs adopted and 13 are in the process of formulating and/or adopting them. That represents an improvement of 190 per cent in the number of countries having initiated the NAP process.

43. It is clear that the bottom-up approach has been used to implement the Convention. However, more than 40 per cent of reports mention the need to create political bodies and devise plans to combat desertification at municipal, provincial and/or country level. Reports stress the need to facilitate the development of new institutional measures to concretize

projects already formulated. Many countries are seeking to attain results without even having clearly defined their institutional arrangements, such as adoption of their NAPs. This approach has impacts at the national level because the need for predictable funding for the implementation of the Convention has not been fully addressed.

44. Some innovative approaches are being adopted in places where drought and coastal erosion represent serious threats, owing to specific climatic, environmental and geo-morphological characteristics. Under NAP formulation synergies are being sought with other bodies that use the ecosystem approach, particularly biodiversity conservation.

45. Although the status of NCBs in the region has improved, their financial autonomy is still at the same low level as in the first reporting period.

C. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements

46. Obtaining funding is a great challenge to the countries of the region. Most of the reports mention that, even though there have been improvements in the availability of certain financial resources, financial assistance is still inadequate and unpredictable at all levels of implementation of the Convention.

47. Some of the countries which were preparing their NAPs last year, asked the UNCCD secretariat for financial support to finalize this process before preparation of the second report. Owing to limited financial resources, the UNCCD secretariat was unable to support all the countries. Some reports stress the urgent need to design a financial strategy to facilitate the flow of financial resources in support of NAP implementation.

48. Seventy-nine per cent of reports mention problems relating to the macro-economic crisis in the region and financial and budget constraints, making the point that without additional financial resources, implementation of the Convention and hence of their NAPs will not be sustainable. The number of countries that have made modest investments of national resources to combat desertification has increased (totalling US$ 11.5 million in 2001/2002 and benefiting more than 26,000 families).

49. Bilateral international cooperation has made it possible to mobilize a small amount of financial resources for some countries. Three reports mention that more significant resources for desertification and land degradation are needed for research and projects.

50. Conceptually the reports stress the need to investigate further the link between natural resources and economic issues, particularly trade, bearing in mind that the terrestrial bio-system performs an economic, social and environmental service and that a mechanism should be devised to attribute value to it.

D. Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies

51. Synergy at the national level was considered one of the most important issues in national reports. Seventy per cent of them mention the need to identify synergies at national level and among international conventions and other policies. However, effective action to build synergies is still in the initial stages in most of the countries.

52. Attention should also be drawn to the initiatives mentioned by some reports for incorporating desertification matters into other policies, such as land conservation, sustainable use of water resources and forestry, capacity building, transfer of technology and information systems. Two Parties report on successful integration of desertification, combating land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought into water resource policies.

53. Twenty-seven per cent of reports mention specific measures to set up a closer working relationship between the sister conventions that emerged from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, for example, meetings of focal points and an intensified exchange of information. One of the operational linkages is the application of experience and knowledge acquired in the formulation of biodiversity strategies. However, in this case, it is difficult to provide an assessment of this exercise, owing to the uncertainty of the results. One report proposes that the approach to addressing desertification should be closely linked to implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Such an approach could be part of a strategy to promote a closer relationship between the UNCCD NAPs and the CBD. Similarly, links could be established with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

54. The UNCCD secretariat provided four countries of the region with financial and technical support to stimulate synergies among the Rio conventions through national meetings. The meetings have demonstrated that synergy in policies cannot be achieved spontaneously, but is the result of targeted efforts. One country has drawn up a synergy plan.

E. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought

55. Thirty per cent of countries comment in detail on the rehabilitation of degraded lands in their national reports. Some important initiatives have been developed, for example relating to soil desalinization and reforestation, and demonstration projects on soil management and measures to certify productive activities have been carried out. Two country Parties have formulated projects to prevent salinization of the soil and to restore saline soils, in the context of their NAPs.

56. Reforestation measures are mentioned in only a few reports. One Party reports that a reforestation programme has restored about 600,000 hectares of land. Other countries mention that they are implementing forestation

programmes covering approximately 20,000 hectares. One country mentions the implementation of soil management demonstration projects on 17,000 hectares, which helped restore productivity and prevent migration.

57. Some countries mention the use of traditional knowledge in the rehabilitation of lands. Thanks to use of the "zero tillage" and "biomass growth" traditional technologies, hundreds of farmers and local communities are benefiting from improved land conservation and productivity. These are considered to be best practices, which could be replicated elsewhere, as appropriate.

58. Other important activities have been developed, for example, formulating strategies for water resource management, issuance of certificates for export products and other projects aimed at stimulating sustainable agricultural practices.

59. Early warning systems are mentioned in seventy per cent of reports. Given the importance in many countries of drought-related problems, these countries are making efforts to develop benchmarks and indicators for drought prevention and for monitoring the effects of drought.

60. Three country Parties report that they already have early warning systems in operation; another four have selected drought indicators but the lack of financial resources is the main constraint on getting drought forecasting operational.

F. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment

61. Generally speaking, assessment of desertification in the LAC region is progressing steadily. At the time of submission of the first national reports, seven countries had finished their diagnoses of desertification. At present, nine countries have completed them; three more have made significant progress in their preparation.

62. Indicators to assess and monitor desertification and drought are considered important for understanding the real extent of the problem at national level. Some countries have made efforts to prepare their national diagnosis to show how big and important the problem is and how it is affecting productivity and populations. The absence of an indicator methodology is a serious constraint, but at least four research teams are working on this issue in the region.

63. Three country Parties have been working, through an ongoing subregional project, to develop a system of indicators to identify and study desertification processes. The project is being implemented by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

64. Mention should be made of the experience of one country in formulating participatory approaches to desertification assessment. Through the project "Participative Assessment of Environmental Quality", stakeholders are being trained at local level to identify environmental changes, including land degradation.

65. Two reports mention the need to develop more research to detect the trends and impacts of climate change at national level, using drought indicators. By contrast, some countries - especially in Central America and the Caribbean - have been monitoring the effects of drought on their economies and population. For them, the problem of drought has high priority.

G. Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

66. Appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how are mentioned only superficially in the second reporting exercise. Appropriate technology and knowledge can be obtained from two sources: (i) available traditional knowledge and, (ii) foreign technology available through international technical cooperation.

67. Two reports mention the "zero tillage" and "bio-mass increase" traditional technologies, which have been widely used in the past, as sound practices for land conservation and to prevent losses due to natural disasters. It is important to notice that the "zero tillage" technology has been used as a viable alternative to modern profit-driven agriculture.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

A. Lessons from the national action programme formulation and implementation process

68. Both the first and second reporting exercises show that country Parties are at different stages of implementation of the Convention, and actions developed during this period reflect these different stages. Six countries have adopted their NAPs, but because of lack of financial resources cannot implement them; 13 countries are working on the formulation of their NAPs or have already drafted them; only some of them have been supported by the UNCCD secretariat. Other countries are still carrying out research to establish the real extent of land degradation and drought at the national level. Technical and financial support is necessary to strengthen these activities so that the UNCCD can be fully implemented in those countries.

69. Some country Parties reaffirm their intention to carry out legal and institutional reforms with a view to achieving normative coherence among the different legal instruments. A group of countries with more experience of combating desertification is seeking ways to decentralize implementation of the Convention. These countries are formulating policies at a local level; creating provincial and or municipal councils; and creating funding mechanisms for projects at a local level or implementing projects with local resources. The formulation of NAPs and their incorporation into national development strategies should be carried out in association with concrete actions for the benefit of land-users.

70. As climate change makes its impact felt, the vulnerability of lower income groups to drought and desertification can only increase. Drought, coastal erosion, climate change and biodiversity losses are of overwhelming importance in some countries. For this reason, adapting NAPs to take account of such issues was emphasized in the second reporting exercise as a viable strategy for developing fully the Convention's potential.

71. All aspects relating to NAP formulation and implementation reflect the broad macro-economic and political context of the region. Persistent economic and financial crises and the structural adjustments that countries are facing represent the most important factor in the vulnerability of policies.

72. Predictable financial resources are crucial to the implementation of the Convention. The absence of mechanisms specifically designed to finance the formulation and implementation of NAPs is a constraint on implementation of the Convention on a sustainable basis. Countries have not attached a sufficiently high priority to desertification during multilateral and bilateral negotiations and consequently international cooperation partners have not developed an efficient mechanism to finance implementation of the Convention.

73. Some countries mention innovative initiatives to finance implementation of the Convention, relating to the environmental services that natural resources provide and to the need to develop a payment system for that. This system could also be applied in combating desertification.

74. Poverty eradication is of great relevance in areas of the region affected by desertification and drought, and some reports indicate innovative ways of attaining this goal. Funds to support small projects and/or productive activities are helping to increase family incomes. Growth in agricultural production through land rehabilitation and conservation is also a way to eradicate poverty and prevent migration. Economically sustainable activities that create jobs and generate incomes should be given special attention by countries and international cooperation partners. Countries and the international community should also address ecological and social vulnerability through the options offered by the Convention.

75. There is a trend towards addressing the institutional and legal aspects of implementation of the Convention separately. The bottom-up approach can be reinforced by setting up participatory bodies at local level, implementing projects and adopting concrete measures that benefit land users.

76. Participatory processes still play an important and positive role in all stages of implementation of the Convention, at national, subregional and regional levels. In the majority of countries, the NGOs, community-based organizations and users of natural resources make a substantial contribution to the preparation and implementation of NAPs, and obtaining recognition for them. This fact has been acknowledged by governments on various occasions, and the reports mention this. Notwithstanding these improvements, civil society's commitment to the Convention needs to be increased.

77. Awareness campaigns and workshops in support of preparation of national reports have created new opportunities, first for stakeholders to take part in building the institutional frameworks necessary for the action programmes and second to satisfy local demands in terms of project implementation.

78. A few countries are working on benchmarks, indicators and traditional knowledge issues. Research institutions are working in these fields in at least four countries, and the results will be useful world-wide. However, additional efforts are still required. It is important to bear in mind the role of international cooperation in finalizing this process.

79. Rehabilitation of degraded lands is crucial to the implementation of the Convention, and for the first time national reports are providing quantitative data on this. For instance, three country Parties report that an area of land covering 647,000 hectares in total has been rehabilitated. This modest figure is nevertheless an important indicator showing that concrete measures are being taken to address land degradation.

80. Traditional knowledge is seldom mentioned in the reports. The "zero tillage" and "bio-mass increase" technologies have been used in many countries, but are only mentioned in two reports. These technologies are one option for adapting sustainable agriculture to market conditions.

B. Lessons from the reporting system

81. Twenty-eight reports were received from the 33 country Parties of the region. There may be several reasons for this limited response, including a lack of genuine commitment at international level to assist affected developing countries in identifying problems. This in itself is an indication that more concerted efforts are needed on the part of all the actors to move forward from the stage of problem identification to finding solutions. There are also a number of internal political problems which directly affect the reporting process and delay timely submission of some reports.

82. The quality of the reports reflects the limited financial support available for the reporting exercise. More accurate data are needed to provide a clear picture of what is happening at the country level; to this end, the use of benchmarks and indicators in national diagnosis of desertification and drought problems is recommended. The format suggested in the Help Guide applies to the earlier stages of the Convention, and for this reason it should be reviewed and updated.

83. The majority of national reports show that the progress made towards implementing the Convention could be reflected better if the collection and recording of information were improved. What is more, the information collected does not reflect, in many cases, the initiatives carried out to combat desertification and drought at national level.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

84. The country Parties in LAC are at different stages of implementation of the Convention. Some countries have already formulated their NAPs and are at the implementation stage. For them, financial support is necessary to lend credibility to the proposed programmes and to execute projects. Other countries require financial and technical support to complete the process of formulating their NAPs. A few countries are at the initial stages and need financial and technical support to mobilize the relevant institutions and actors for implementation of the Convention. The UNCCD secretariat is often requested to provide technical and financial support to countries in all the above-mentioned stages and has been assisting them in accordance with its limited possibilities.

85. Indicators on desertification and drought are of great importance in the region, and both country Parties and the international community should pay more attention to them. Few countries yet have a drought early warning system in operation. Some countries have produced drought indicators, but they need funding to implement them; the majority still has to develop them. Notwithstanding some significant progress, indicators on desertification cannot be considered to be in the final stages of development. This reflects the inherent difficulties of the subject. It is not a simple task to select and use indicators on desertification, since a specialized infrastructure and human resources are required. The majority of countries do not have adequate resources at their disposal.

86. Projects relating to benchmarks and indicators have already been formulated under some NAPs. Once these projects are implemented, their results could be replicated in other countries or subregions. The existence of several research teams working in the region on benchmarks and indicators is an advantage that should be better exploited. The international community should include these issues in a cooperation agenda.

87. Awareness campaigns are an effective means of generating momentum in the implementation of the Convention. As mentioned above, countries have used awareness campaigns to mobilize various stakeholders, and to demonstrate to them the importance of controlling land degradation and desertification. Moreover, it has proved possible to design general outlines for tackling these problems and, in some cases, to draft NAPs. NGOs and other organizations have participated effectively in the process. Efforts have to be made to facilitate and improve the quality of their participation by civil society in the implementation of the Convention and to coordinate the activities of the various bodies involved. It is recommended that the UNCCD secretariat continue supporting national awareness campaigns, thus facilitating the participation of civil society.

88. Reports highlight the importance of implementing the UNCCD through synergy among the sister conventions. One reason is the lack of available financial resources, and another the linkages among issues. However, concrete activities to achieve synergy among the sister conventions and environmental policies are not simple. National synergy plans must be formulated and implemented, since they can be instruments to integrate these

conventions into environmental policies. This process is an ongoing effort on which the UNCCD secretariat should continue to focus.

89. Reports recognize the low institutional and operational profile of focal points and the need to improve their technical and institutional capacities. The capacity of focal points to formulate projects and conduct negotiations with national and international organizations should be strengthened. The UNCCD secretariat should play a more active role in this process and should provide the necessary resources to improve the capabilities of focal points.

90. The Latin American and Caribbean region has a very valuable stock of traditional knowledge. Corresponding studies have been carried out at national and regional levels, some of them supported by the UNCCD secretariat. Reports mention many different technologies that could be applied in a sustainable way, in the region and world-wide. However, there is still a need for more comprehensive studies into their adaptation for use in modern productive models in competitive market conditions, with the exception of the 'zero tillage' and biomass growth technologies.

91. The progress made in the implementation of the Convention in the region can be seen in the various activities implemented and the results achieved. This means that the cost-effectiveness of financial resources applied was high, since the level of external financing to the region was not significant. The majority of countries expressed their intention to move forward in the implementation of the Convention by finalizing NAPs, implementing projects at local level and preparing other related activities, such as workshops on water resources and forestry. Country Parties are seeking to establish partnerships with developed country Parties for the provision of predictable financial support. Several countries have approached the UNCCD secretariat on a number of occasions for catalytic support, but it has not been possible to assist them in all cases due to the financial constraints.

92. As to the reporting process, it is recommended that efforts be made to create databases, at national level, on the implementation of the Convention. This initiative should be linked to the current efforts to set up a desertification information network for the LAC region (DESELAC).

Part Two

PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

I. INTRODUCTION

93. According to decision 11/COP.1, country Parties may provide information on subregional and regional activities. The secretariat of the UNCCD has prepared the present report on regional and subregional activities using documents and information available, in particular the reports of the seven regional meetings, the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the last four meetings of the Forum of the LAC Ministers of the Environment.

II. BACKGROUND

94. The Latin American and Caribbean region (LAC) accounts for 15 per cent of the world's land area, or around 20 million km^2, 7.7 per cent of its total population, or 502 million people, and it generates 5.7 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). (World Bank, 1997).

95. Far-reaching social and economic changes have led to many conflicting trends and taken a heavy toll on the region's natural resources. In most countries, structural reforms, economic growth, economic liberalization and privatization have left unresolved, if not worsened, the scourge of poverty. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (Social panorama of Latin America 2000/2001, September 2001), there were more than 211 million poor in 1999.

96. Addressing poverty is essential to combating desertification in the region. It requires harmonization of a wide range of policies aimed at assuring economic effectiveness, social equity and ecological integrity. The strengthening of endogenous capacities is a major challenge, particularly regarding analysis and implementation of policies and strategies.

97. Today, more than 320 million hectares of land in the region are affected by desertification processes, mainly due to human actions: poor agricultural practices and over-exploitation, overgrazing, deforestation, expansion of the agricultural frontier causing, *inter alia*, soil erosion, chemical degradation, compaction, sodification, salinization and biodiversity loss. The deterioration in water quality and availability has not only affected productivity, but also resulted in human losses caused by the spread of water-related diseases, like the outbreak of cholera at the beginning of 1990s and the recent dengue epidemic. Moreover, the extremely high rate of urbanization (74 per cent of the population, with an annual growth of 2.3 per cent) and the lack of appropriate land management on a national scale have intensified competition and conflict among land and water users.

98. The efforts made in recent decades towards the sustainable use of natural resources have yielded few results. The pressure on land and water resources has been intensified, resulting in serious resource degradation, loss of productivity (in the face of growing demands for food, construction materials and fuel), migration to urban areas or to even more marginal and fragile soils, disintegration of social structures, economic and political instability, and perpetuation and aggravation of rural and urban poverty.

99. The participatory approach has been successful in the UNCCD implementation process at the regional and subregional level: civil society, local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), indigenous groups, together with representatives of state and local institutions, have participated in activities designed to raise awareness and provide an opportunity to discuss possible future initiatives, taking into account the multi-dimensional character of the problems. The International Network of Non-Governmental Organizations to Combat Desertification (RIOD-LAC) is fully recognized as a vital element in the process.

100. The role of the Desertification Information Network for the Latin American and Caribbean Region (DESELAC), created by the LAC countries and included in the regional action programme (RAP), is paramount to strengthening the participation of all stakeholders and facilitating the exchange of experience and information among them.

101. Funding remains the most significant problem. The scarce resources mobilized so far are not sufficient to cover the priority activities identified in the RAP and the subregional action programmes (SRAPs). However, the RAP and SRAPs are slowly but steadily being implemented, starting with configuration of the institutional frameworks and formulation of concrete work plans to enhance horizontal cooperation among developing countries. In particular, during the sixth and seventh regional meetings and at a number of subregional meetings, the Parties committed themselves to elaborate strategies in order to secure greater involvement of donor partners in activities at regional and subregional level.

III. SYNTHESIS OF TRENDS CONCERNING SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

102. There are six SRAPs: Gran Chaco Americano, Puna Americana, Mesoamerica, the Hispaniola, the islands of the Eastern Caribbean on biodiversity and land degradation, and the Chile/Argentina bilateral programme on gender perspectives. The two latter have not been implemented for lack of funding.

103. The RAP contains nine priority projects. They play a catalytic role in NAP formulation and implementation, but have made only limited progress because of little access to predictable financial resources.

104. Moreover, regional dynamics have made it possible to develop new initiatives within the subregional, regional and interregional frameworks. Five further initiatives are in preparation or implementation: synergy in Central American countries; integration of priority activities to combat desertification into the framework established by agreements between the

African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and the European Union (EU); development of benchmarks and indicators on drought and land degradation in the Caribbean; integrated watershed management in LAC countries; and implementation of the interregional platform of cooperation between Africa and LAC.

IV. PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

A. Subregional action programme for the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco Americano

105. The area of the Gran Chaco Americano comprises around 1 million km², of which 53 per cent is in Argentina (10 provinces), 24 per cent in Paraguay (three provinces) and 13 per cent in Bolivia (three provinces). It represents one of the largest dryland ecosystems of the region (six per cent of South America), with important biodiversity. Various studies that used biophysical and socioeconomic indicators have identified severe levels of desertification in the region, revealing the gravity of the situation and the urgent need for measures to stop and reverse the process.

106. The Gran Chaco SRAP has attracted new interest, at both national and international level, since its launching forum (Argentina, May 2000). The meeting drew up a concrete action plan for the subregion, prioritized objectives and refined previous initiatives. While awaiting the availability of adequate funds, Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay have, in the meantime, strengthened the programme institutionally with the creation of a provisional tri-national consulting committee, the promotion of data transfer, research, training and education, cooperation with the academic sector, the rural production sector, NGOs, local communities and indigenous groups. The UNCCD secretariat provided support for the organization of a NGOs' meeting on desertification and rural poverty (Argentina, June 2001) at which NGO involvement in the implementation of the Gran Chaco SRAP was discussed.

107. At the local level, a number of micro-projects have been implemented, self-managed by indigenous and farming communities. Women represent a high percentage of the participants in the activities. Left behind by seasonal migration movements that concern mainly men, women and their families very often remain alone to work the land and manage natural resources. They become the most vulnerable group to desertification and, thus, the most fragile constituency among the poor.

108. At the political level, one of the most important achievements has been the Declaration on Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Gran Chaco Americano (Argentina, September 2001). The Declaration constitutes a valuable political effort to give more visibility to initiatives undertaken in the subregion and a concrete platform for the further institutionalization of the process.

109. At the institutional level, monitoring units have been set up in the countries, *inter alia* to generate the conditions necessary for integrating the issues relating to Gran Chaco ecosystem into the programmes that are already receiving international support. These units will also guarantee the

continuity of administrative and technical activities and act as a permanent point of reference for actors at national and local levels, and for other institutional partners and international organizations; they will promote the constant flow and dissemination of information and integrate their activities with national institutional networks, including universities, research institutes, RIOD, indigenous associations and farmers' associations. The same activities had been carried out under the programme for the exchange and systematization of experience among Gran Chaco organizations. Additionally, a citizens' control committee allows communities to play a full part in monitoring and assessing the work being carried out.

B. Subregional action programme for the sustainable development of the Puna Americana

110. As in the Gran Chaco, the bio-climatic conditions prevailing throughout most of the Puna Americana determine the very fragile ecosystems and the very difficult socioeconomic conditions of the local populations. This area comprises around 700,000 km², consisting mainly of shallow and often salt-affected or stony and rocky soils in the medium and higher elevations, with uneven distribution of surface water resources, rare or erratic rainfall, and daily fluctuations in temperature due to low humidity and high solar radiation. Poverty affects most of the people living in the Andean area: out of 12 million inhabitants, 60 per cent are poor (80 per cent if only rural areas are considered). Excessive fragmentation of land tenure, high unemployment rates, high infant malnutrition and mortality indices, a deficit of basic services, significant migration (50 per cent of men have already left the region), lack of communication and trade facilities and very limited access to lending are among the factors that determine an economy of mere subsistence. This type of economy is often associated with overgrazing and destruction of biodiversity. Moreover, the intense mining activity associated with foreign investment has radically transformed traditional agro-pastoral habits in certain areas and severely affected the environment in terms of reduced water availability and pollution.

111. The ratification of the Convention by Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru, together with the experience acquired in the Gran Chaco SRAP, paved the way for the formulation of the Puna Americana SRAP, to which was recently added the area of Paramo, at the request of Ecuador.

112. The meeting for the coordination of the Puna Americana SRAP (Bolivia, May 2001) was an important step forward in the process. The meeting clarified the principles and concepts of the programme, revised priorities and strategies, proposed an institutional framework and, most importantly, drew up a concrete agenda of activities.

113. The participation of indigenous populations and community-based organizations was recognized as the fundamental principle on which projects and other activities should be based. As the original inhabitants of the region, they possess a heritage of knowledge and traditional practices which is of undeniable value for the sustainable management of natural resources.

114. The concrete involvement of the Aymara Parliament is of particular relevance to the participatory process. It is a completely new element in strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in the Puna Americana. The Parliament was created in June 1996 to protect the hydrological resources of the Andean watersheds and the ecology and environment of areas seriously threatened by new production and consumption patterns, and to safeguard the ancestral culture, identity and knowledge of indigenous peoples. It brings together the millions of people who are descended from the Qullana and who are currently dispersed in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru. This itinerant parliament puts particular emphasis on land degradation and desertification processes. Its principal concerns are: environmental impact assessment studies, especially on indiscriminate water withdrawal from Lake Titicaca; awareness raising and environmental education programmes for stakeholders; promotion of bio-horticultural practices; and construction and maintenance of terraces for food production on steep slopes.

115. A declaration on the sustainable development of the Puna Americana, which makes specific reference to the Convention, was also agreed and signed (Bolivia, January 2002). In this declaration, the Aymara Parliament proposes to: organize open and participatory meetings to sensitize the public and authorities to the principles and objectives of the Convention; establish technical bodies for scientific and operational studies aimed at helping in the formulation of integrated programmes and projects; implement joint actions producing equal benefits for all and protecting natural resources from injudicious use; set up effective information systems; promote synergy among the sustainable development conventions; request the help of the international community and cooperation agencies.

116. One relevant initiative is the association of Aymara municipalities (Mancomunidad de Municipios Aymaras sin Fronteras) that brings together the mayors of subregions from across Bolivia, Chile and Peru. With the support of the World Bank, it has been working since 2001 on a tri-national project for the sustainable development of the municipalities of the Puna Americana, including combating desertification. The first priority of the project is the exchange of systematized and standardized information, through a permanent communication network, and dissemination through mass media and audio-visual products.

117. The institutional framework of the Puna Americana SRAP has been strengthened by the creation of a secretariat that will help coordinate the implementation of planned activities, mainly by managing available funds and facilitating the information flow. A technical and operational executive committee has been set up, composed of national focal points (NFPs) and representatives of indigenous communities belonging to the Quechua and Aymara peoples. Both the secretariat and the executive committee will be closely linked to government, academic and research institutions, civil organizations and production sectors.

C. Subregional action programme in Mesoamerica

118. At the Fifth Regional Meeting of LAC countries (Peru, August 1999), country Parties requested the UNCCD secretariat to promote a technical and scientific diagnosis of the status of desertification and its socioeconomic and environmental impacts in Central America, to facilitate the establishment of an integrated early warning and monitoring system in the subregion and assess options for the integration and participation of the various sectors in combating desertification. The study was presented at the Sixth Regional Meeting of LAC countries (El Salvador, October 2000).

119. The general objective of the diagnosis was to identify and characterize current and potential areas at risk of desertification in Central America by formulating and applying a clear methodology based on the integration of existing classification systems. The assessment was based on a set of indicators which took particular account of indexes of vulnerability due to climatic factors and anthropogenic actions, of the political-institutional framework and of the socioeconomic conditions. Eight eco-regions located in the sub-humid, dry and semi-arid climatic zones were identified. They cover approximately 45 per cent of the total Central American land area, or 242,699 km^2, of which 178,011 km^2 are seriously degraded and under serious threat of desertification. Particular attention was drawn to the fact that these areas are mainly mountainous and present severe geomorphological difficulties for agriculture and cattle production.

120. El Niño affects Central America and the Caribbean subregion more than other subregions. Since 1982 it has hit the area five times, causing prolonged periods of drought and high annual precipitation, like Hurricane Mitch, which caused disaster in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador in 1998. In Honduras, the Lenca indigenous group was one of the few that successfully overcame the effects of Hurricane Mitch thanks to the use of sustainable, centuries-old land management and agricultural techniques. The World Bank has expressed its intention to promote these traditional practices as crucial instruments for land protection, and to replicate them in other vulnerable areas.

121. Almost 35 million people live in the subregion, and that number is expected to rise to 46 million by 2020. Eighty per cent of the population is concentrated in 25 per cent of the territory, corresponding to the "Logistic Central American corridor". Spanning the Pacific coastline, this is where all the large installations and major infrastructure are located and where urbanization will probably increase.

122. Against this background, poverty is one of the major factors threatening natural resources, owing to the lack of alternative options to satisfy the basic needs of the population. Seventy-one per cent of the rural population is poor, 50 per cent in the urbar areas. The poor mainly live in marginal and fragile zones where the problems associated with steep slopes are aggravated by the high demand for wood, water and food, causing deforestation (the subregion's annual rate is among the highest in the world), land degradation and environmental pollution.

123. The weakness of existing sustainable development programmes, the inadequacy of institutional capacity to control the territory and the legal constraints on the utilization of natural resources make the region even more prone to desertification. In rare cases, programmes include property rights, rational land management, impact of activities of large investors and payment for environmental services.

124. The experience in the subregion of monitoring and early warning systems based on participative planning and implementation by local stakeholders can be very useful in addressing the fatalistic attitude that overwhelms local people after a disaster occurs, when they are not properly informed and not aware of positive experiences in similar situations. Moreover, joint formulation of monitoring and early warning systems and action plans strengthens the commitment of the different actors and encourages them to share responsibility for implementation.

Synergy in Central American countries

125. Inter-institutional coordination has taken place at national and subregional level, both before and after the Rio summit. This is a requirement for countries that share ecosystems, to avoid overlapping and to maximize synergistic effects.

126. The NFPs have formulated a preliminary project for promoting synergy among the Rio conventions and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands at the national and subregional level in Central America. The main objective of the project is to capitalize on national, subregional, regional and international efforts to implement the conventions and maximize the benefits of technological transfer and financial support by identifying converging, interlinked and common issues among the conventions. The first result would be, in the national context, the harmonized implementation of programmes, plans and projects formulated at national and subregional levels, which apply an ecosystem approach based on the close links between land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change.

127. The recently created technical committee on desertification and drought of the Central American Commission for the Environment and Development (CCAD), could play a fundamental role in catalyzing support. In fact, the CCAD, at its thirty-second ordinary meeting held in Nicaragua, in January 2002, affirmed that the technical committee was intended to consider combating desertification and drought as a policy priority for subregional action. The committee was created in the aftermath of the serious drought of 2001, when the Central American ministers of the environment requested technical assistance to assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of drought and draw up a subregional mitigation and prevention strategy for reducing the impact of similar events in the future. The committee, constituted by the UNCCD national focal points, held its first meeting in April 2002 and is currently preparing a calendar of activities for 2002-2003 that focuses on NAP formulation in the seven countries of the subregion and on synergies in implementation of these activities.

D. Hispaniola subregional action programme

128. In 2001, the Dominican Republic, with the support of the Global Mechanism and the Investment Centre of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), started work on formulating an action plan for the transboundary area (PAN-FRO) to assess the conditions particular to the border zone with Haiti.

129. An inter-institutional working group carried out and finalized a preliminary study in January 2002. It has collected and systematized considerable amounts of information, scattered throughout the country, resulting from decades of research and analysis of the environmental and socioeconomic conditions of that area. Thus, it represents an appropriate platform for future bilateral cooperation to improve the living conditions of local populations and to stop and reverse the severe natural resource degradation in the area.

130. This transboundary area covers 10,845 km² where most of the 500,000 inhabitants live in poverty. This is, for example, the case of the Elías Piña province. Furthermore, El Niño has recently given rise to atypical atmospheric phenomena, lengthening the normal dry periods and worsening the already severe hydrological deficit in most provinces.

131. As for the legal and institutional framework, the Dominican Republic has a well developed set of environmental laws and policies on land, water, biological and human resources. The border area is a priority within the country's development strategy. The objective of the recently created Secretariat for Natural Resources and Environment (SEMARENA) is to establish rules and norms for environmental conservation, protection, improvement and restoration, which would ensure the sustainable and rational use of natural resources through cooperation with other government institutions in the area.

132. Currently, a set of programmes and projects specifically designed for the transboundary area, or with major indirect impacts on it, are being implemented. None of them has been expressly formulated within the framework of the UNCCD. Nevertheless, they can contribute significantly to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. However, much remains to be done, especially in achieving concrete and effective cooperation with the neighbouring country, once the institutional framework in Haiti has been adequately improved.

E. Integration of priority activities to combat desertification within the framework of the ACP/EU Partnership Agreement

133. The process of bringing the ACP and the UNCCD secretariats closer together started with the first consultative meeting, held in Brussels, Belgium, in October 2000, between the ACP committee of ambassadors and the UNCCD secretariat. On that occasion, the existing linkages between the Cotonou partnership agreement (Benin, June 2000) and the UNCCD Convention were recognized. They are based on partnership building through common principles: bottom-up approach and grass-root involvement of concerned communities, and the similar objectives to eradicate poverty by targeting the

use of natural resources to achieve sustainable development in the countries concerned.

134. The two secretariats have entered into consultations with a view to catalyzing national coordination and assisting the ACP countries to select and integrate priority activities to combat desertification at the national level and support strategies under the Cotonou agreement at the regional level. The recommendations were collected and officially formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding (Belgium, May 2001).

135. Several consultative meetings have been organized with the Caribbean countries (Germany, April 2001; Jamaica, May 2001; Switzerland, October 2001) to inform participants of developments in the implementation of the Convention, to highlight the cooperation opportunities offered by the new process and to promote the inclusion of combating land degradation and drought mitigation in national and regional support strategies. National and regional indicative programmes currently under preparation with the technical and expert support of the UNCCD secretariat to specific Caribbean country Parties should also be included.

136. In spite of this, only the Dominican Republic has been able to include land degradation and drought issues in its Country Support Strategy and National Indicative Programme. Other countries have been unable to do so because the EU agenda for ACP cooperation had already been set. The alternative was to include these issues in the regional strategy, formulation of which began in September 2001. To this end, the following recommendations were made: to increase the role of the UNCCD NFPs in the process, in particular to introduce regular consultations with national authorizing officers and other representatives of ministries involved in the formulation of the strategy; to organize information campaigns in the national media to create and consolidate public awareness of the need to include UNCCD priority projects in the strategy; and to strengthen the consultative dialogue among donor countries and institutions with a view to including UNCCD priority projects in the rolling programming.

V. PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

137. The RAP was formally approved at the third regional meeting (Cuba, March 1997), following intensive consultations at previous meetings. Some of the main components of the RAP are presented here.

A. Benchmarks and indicators for monitoring desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean

138. The project concerning the development of indicators and monitoring tools to promote science-based policies for dryland protection against desertification started in 2000 after the workshop on methodology (Mexico, February 1999) was held with the financial support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project is in its last phase and will conclude in August 2002, but information can be provided about the methodology followed and the main outcomes anticipated.

139. The project, which received a financial contribution from the GEF and assistance from the Natural Heritage Institute, involves governments, NGOs, local communities and academic institutions in Brazil, Chile and Mexico. The main objective is to design a possible model framework for assessing and integrating indicators that could help decision-makers evaluate the physical, social and economic patterns that threaten dryland biological resources through the identification of the immediate, intermediate and ultimate causes of land degradation and biodiversity loss as well as community impacts in dryland areas.

140. Some areas for pilot projects were selected in each country on the basis of a number of criteria, including the presence of significant biodiversity; the degree of desertification; the level of poverty associated with migration rates and other socioeconomic factors; the availability of data for the areas and the willingness of local communities to participate in the project.

141. A number of biophysical and socioeconomic indicators have been identified, with a view to their potential application at the country and regional levels. A field manual containing standardized criteria and procedures has been prepared for assessing biophysical and socioeconomic indicators. A new software tool called Monitor for integrating data and evaluating trends among the indicators in the pilot areas will be tested by community and government decision-makers and undergo strict quality control. The experiences gained will be disseminated in the region, in accordance with the RAP.

Development of benchmarks and indicators on drought and land degradation in the Caribbean

142. In accordance with decision 5 of the seventh regional meeting (Chile, August 2001), the secretariat was requested to organize a workshop on benchmarks and indicators for the countries of the Caribbean subregion. The basic idea behind this exercise is to begin working on the development of standards that the countries can use to determine, *inter alia*, the changes in land degradation and drought in the subregion and assess the results of the plans and programmes implemented.

B. Desertification information network for the LAC region

143. The RAP provided for the establishment of DESELAC, a regional system of information and communication among actors engaged in combating desertification. At the fourth regional meeting (Antigua and Barbuda, April/May 1996), country Parties defined the objectives and characteristics of the electronic information network, which has its central node in the UNCCD RCU in Mexico City.

144. DESELAC was conceived as a regional interactive link among existing electronic networks and available databases at the national, subregional and regional levels. Its aim was to integrate, consolidate and exchange relevant data and information on desertification and drought, thus ensuring continuous and systematic monitoring of the affected areas, *inter alia*, through dissemination of research and studies into the issues, particularly technical

and scientific data, including socioeconomic and biophysical indicators, geographical and statistical information, good practices and success stories replicable in the region.

145. With the support of the secretariat, a preliminary database was set up which identified resource requirements and assessed the capacity-building needs of the whole region.

146. A mailing list has been created to connect all UNCCD focal points in the region, experts, relevant NGOs, community-based organizations and others having an interest in finding sustainable solutions to land degradation and other environmental problems in LAC. The list has been continuously expanded and currently contains more than 750 addresses, including scientific institutions and secondary learning institutions. The list allows, *inter alia*, the holding of on-line conferences and distribution of the monthly newsletter prepared by the secretariat.

147. Some country Parties received financial or technical support to enhance their national capacities and configure their electronic systems in line with the technology and the architecture used for DESELAC. The aim was to facilitate communication with and within the network. To date, only a few countries have requested installation of national DESELAC nodes.

148. The steps undertaken to date have not been sufficient to make DESELAC into the decentralized and innovative management tool for which country Parties called at the regional meetings. A number of shortcomings have prevented the network from developing its full potential. Notwithstanding the importance of the issues under discussion, the electronic conferences organized have been attended by only a very limited number of participants and countries. The amount of information exchanged on the network has been far below expectation. The different languages used still represent an obstacle to the smooth running of the system and the secretariat is currently looking for ways to overcome this problem.

149. The fact that the RCU has not been functioning properly since 2000 represents the most important constraint on the full implementation and operation of DESELAC. At the moment, there is no secure and predictable source of funding for the RCU, since no decision was taken by the COP at its fifth session on inclusion of the costs in the core budget of the secretariat.

150. The UNCCD secretariat is currently working on reactivating the regional coordination unit based at the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROLAC) in Mexico City. Negotiations with UNEP/ROLAC on the provision of working space for the UNCCD RCU are in their final stages. Once these are completed, a coordinator will be appointed to handle the overall management of the RCU. DESELAC, in particular, would be a major priority for the RCU and, as a consequence, significant improvements in the development and functioning of the network are expected in the near future.

C. Integrated watershed management in Latin America and the Caribbean

151. The growing shortage of water available to populations in Latin American and Caribbean is of great concern. There is an imperative need to study the major causes of the problem and find effective measures to resolve it. The collection of relevant data for use in future strategic planning for sustainable socioeconomic development, and education and information are key factors that must be considered for water resources management, mitigating the effects of drought and combating desertification.

152. In this context, the first regional workshop on integrated watershed management in LAC (Venezuela, September 2001) was a very positive exercise to promote comprehensive studies on the major causes of the problems, which will provide adequate and reliable data and analyses for future strategic and integrated planning. The meeting received financial support from Germany and Italy, and technical assistance from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The latter prepared a comprehensive study on priority activities in the field of transboundary water resources management within the context of the RAP.

153. Attended by more than 90 delegates and representatives from LAC countries, international institutions and NGOs, the meeting can be considered as the first step in a results-oriented process under a regional water programme shortly to be developed. The focus has been put, among other things, on water availability and watershed management, paying particular attention to the links with land degradation, desertification and drought. The aim is to formulate technical and political solutions to the problems identified, using the (micro-) watershed as the management unit, promote awareness and participation among all stakeholders, develop methods and procedures that are based on equity as a social function, and promote equal rights and the free access of all stakeholders to this common valuable resource. The need to identify the main technical and institutional bottlenecks, *inter alia*, for data collection and information sharing, was stressed in order to develop effective early warning systems for flood control and drought preparedness activities, and to foster cooperation for the integrated management of water resources of transboundary rivers, lakes and hydro-geological basins.

154. It emerged from the meeting that fully participatory and integrated management of water, considered in the first instance as an environmental and social resource and as an element of social stability, must be guaranteed to avoid conflicts associated with their use. To that end, it was necessary to provide stakeholders with the information, education and knowledge they required to participate in the decision-making process and in the implementation of actions relating to water management and conservation.

155. Based on an ecosystem approach, it was recommended that preventive measures and early warning systems covering all relevant risks, such as drought, floods and land degradation, and based on common guidelines, benchmarks and indicators, should be set up as a matter of urgency, not least through effective regional and international coordination and cooperation.

156. The main result of the meeting was that countries of the region agreed on the need to develop an integrated regional programme on water, based on the watershed as the management unit. The aim is to assess regional water distribution, identify priority areas, design an environmental management system, establish institutional and legal frameworks for transboundary watershed management, and set education and training programmes for users and managers, promoting at the same time traditional knowledge, clean technologies and best practices. There are new proposals for programme formulation which will be discussed within the region in the near future.

D. Interregional platform of cooperation between Africa and LAC

157. Since its inception and launch (Brazil, 1998), the platform has focused on measures to strengthen national institutional and human capacities and on increasing the number and quality of opportunities available to countries in the fields of knowledge sharing, exchange of best practices and access to technical and financial resources. The measures identified derive, in principle, from a clear definition of objectives and their location within the broad matrix of priorities as defined at national or regional level.

158. To this day, the constant dialogue generated by the platform has helped countries in both regions to adopt and implement concrete actions that have directly contributed towards the advancement of the UNCCD's objectives. After the conclusion of the partnership agreements, workshops and training courses have been organized for technicians of the two regions with the support of Portugal and Venezuela. Currently, four projects concerning the creation of youth environmental brigades are being implemented in Benin, Cap Verde, Mozambique and Niger thanks to the voluntary contributions of Germany and Venezuela.

159. The Third High-Level Forum on Cooperation between Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Venezuela, February 2002) was a further opportunity for direct consultations among participant countries. Over 115 delegates from 43 countries of the regions participated in the forum. The President of Venezuela, the Prime Ministers of Mozambique and Niger, ministers of 16 countries, and representatives of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as various national authorities were among the participants.

160. Participants stressed that South-South cooperation represented at the international level a valuable and necessary tool to reverse the process of desertification, make efficient use of resources and generate the necessary resources to combat poverty in the affected areas. They called upon the international community to provide financial, scientific and technological support to developing countries in combating desertification and poverty, emphasized the role of private sector in achieving these objectives, noted that synergies could enhance the potential to implement the platform, and underscored the need to facilitate access to financing and make more efficient use of resources, including the need for countries to contribute concretely to the efforts to implement the platform of cooperation.

161. However, implementation of the platform still lags behind expectations, owing to the lack of financial resources. As a consequence, delegates stressed the need for a joint pledge to secure the predictable financial resources essential to carrying out projects and programmes under the UNCCD and to guaranteeing the sustainability of the planned activities in accordance with the priorities outlined in the NAPs. In particular, the importance of the GEF becoming the UNCCD financing mechanism was stressed, as was the need to identify innovative sources of funding. Additionally, it was proposed that the secretariat should enter into consultations with the GEF to explore possibilities for designing a financing mechanism, similar to the small grants developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to enhance NGO participation at the national level, through a fast-track approval project cycle.

162. The President of the Forum, H.E. Mr. H. Chavez, will submit the Caracas Declaration, together with the programmes and activities identified, to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

163. The regional and subregional action programmes in LAC are progressing steadily. While countries are genuinely interested in regional cooperation on programme implementation, it is evident that predictable sources of funding from the international community are needed to make steady progress.

164. Concrete initiatives must be undertaken urgently in order to boost the process of implementing Agenda 21 and building, in a fully fledged participatory process, relying on coherent partnerships at the local, national and international levels, particularly in the areas of finance and technology transfer.

A. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations

165. There is a broadening consensus that only an integrated approach to the problems of poverty and environmental degradation can result in sustainable development. Of the priority actions that must be undertaken in the region in this regard, empowering local communities is one major step towards poverty eradication and environmental protection, human resources and institutional capacity building, livelihood and job creation, and equity for women.

166. Thus, social cohesion and inclusion must be promoted, since they are indispensable to a continuous and participative dialogue among all stakeholders, which will lead to the required consensus around key policy reforms.

167. The participatory process is acquiring increasing importance in the region as one of the major driving forces of sustainable development. The trend is towards decentralization of state policies and programmatic frameworks. The growing capacity for mobilizing local communities reflects

the principle that decisions should not be made for, but by, the people themselves.

168. Despite its limited resources, the secretariat has supported grass-roots participation, empowering community-based organizations and NGOs by facilitating their participation in international meetings, in the set-up and functioning of RIOD-LAC, in organizing activities at the national and regional levels (such as awareness-raising seminars and campaigns, formulation and implementation of capacity-building and field projects, debates within RIOD-LAC to monitor the achievements of the network, detecting failures and identifying opportunities). The contributions have been small but have certainly reinforced partnerships between local communities and governments. One positive indication of this trend is the increased number of NGOs accredited to the fifth session of the COP.

169. However, more needs to be done. At their last regional meeting (Cuba, May 2001), the representatives of RIOD-LAC drew attention to the need to introduce budgetary lines into the NAPs for civil society participation; include RIOD-LAC national representatives on the NCBs; and improve communication facilities among regional members.

B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

170. Countries of the region have, especially in recent years, set up a solid legislative framework for intervening effectively in initiatives to promote sustainable development and the successful implementation of the Convention. Among other things, they have introduced land tenure reforms, set limits on natural resource use, especially forests, extended protected areas and promoted the participatory process. However, the countries of the region should make major efforts to strengthen preventive (incentives) and reactive (command and control) regulation instruments.

171. In many cases, the entire body of legislation has been rationalized to eliminate obsolete or conflicting laws and rules and introduce integrated legislative instruments to deal with macro-economic policy, social affairs, indebtedness and trade. The incorporation of environmental criteria into domestic funding policies, however, is still in its early stages.

172. At the regional and subregional levels, institutional affairs have commanded most attention. While waiting for adequate technical and financial resources to be channelled to them, country Parties have created or upgraded the set of institutions they needed to implement the programmes formulated, as in the case of the Gran Chaco and the Puna Americana. These shared institutional mechanisms are neither politically independent nor economically autonomous. Their functioning depends entirely on continuity and on the level of support given to them by the respective national bodies.

C. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements

173. Funding remains the most important constraint on the implementation of regional and subregional activities. The international community does not

perceive the region as being seriously affected by land degradation or drought. This perception certainly has a significant influence on the level of financial and technical resources made available. While the secretariat is constantly trying to catalyse efforts in the region, LAC countries could surely do more to mobilize internal funds and to heighten awareness of the situation in the region, as described in the national reports, so that RAP and SRAP activities are made priorities.

174. Integrated watershed management could be chosen as the common cross-cutting issue to promote the sustainable use and protection of ecosystem resources. Countries of the region have already had the opportunity to assess progress attained at the national level and to distil important lessons which encourage a spirit of openness and sharing. The RAP could be an appropriate framework for integrated transboundary watershed management, assuring linkages with sustainable development strategies, poverty eradication policies, land management and assuring the involvement of women and young people. Land protection is crucial to increasing water retention, and sustainable and environmentally sound agricultural practices combined with traditional or new knowledge and technologies, can ensure clean production and better water use.

175. The Global Mechanism has promoted some actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of financial and technical resources for the implementation of the Convention in a number of countries of the region. These efforts are not sufficient in the long term compared with the enormous needs identified by the programmes. A considerable number of activities agreed at meetings and forums are still pending due to the lack of funding, and the follow-up of successful projects is at risk for the same reason. Strengthening existing partnerships in the region may be only a partial solution to future needs in terms of financial and human resources. Bilateral, regional and multilateral actors should provide sustained support to the ongoing process. The resources made available to activities are the only true measure of the commitment of those actors.

176. In this respect and in accordance with the call made by ministers at the Thirteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil, October 2001), the establishment of the GEF as the main financial instrument of the Convention would enable a more strategic, substantive and clear-cut focus on the concerted actions required to implement the Convention at the regional and subregional levels and to put those programmes into full operation.

D. Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies

177. In a number of regional and international meetings, LAC ministers and representatives have stressed the need to identify synergy among the Rio conventions and to formulate concrete working plans, including starting a coordination process that will bring benefits to countries and the region as a whole.

178. The results of the four national workshops already organized in LAC and the experience of other regions are a solid basis for explaining the implementation procedures and reporting requirements under the different conventions. They also clarify key elements in the decision-making process that are common to the conventions, namely: emphasis on participatory development, integrated programming, partnership arrangements and consultative aspects of a country-driven implementation process. National policies should be harmonized through integrated programmes, as is already the case in some countries of the region.

179. A synergistic approach would help in promoting the benefits of, for instance, the environmental services of forests and agro-forest systems, such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity, soil and water conservation, scenic beauty and others.

180. Drought and desertification early warning systems could take advantage of operational meteorological observation systems. Here, Central American countries and Cuba could play a pivotal role, since they have developed valuable experience in the framework of other international legal instruments and their experience can be replicated in other countries of the region.

E. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought

181. The natural disasters which have occurred in recent years and the increase in both their direct and indirect costs in terms of human losses and the financial burden, constitute a heavy mortgage on development in the countries of the region. Prevention and mitigation of desertification and drought require clear definition of risk management, early analysis of existing threats and vulnerabilities and the implementation of risk management mechanisms.

182. Regional and international financial institutions, together with bilateral and multilateral donors, play an essential role in funding prevention and mitigation activities in the region and supporting, on a predictable and sustainable basis, the establishment and operation of effective early warning systems.

183. Cooperation among LAC countries is paramount and best practises must be disseminated as widely as possible to benefit other parts of the region, for instance, the experience of land rehabilitation acquired in Ecuador and Chile is potentially replicable all over the region.

F. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment

184. Evaluating and mitigating the effects of desertification in the region will not be effective if causal links are not clearly established between desertification and its root causes, and corresponding strategies identified. The assessment and monitoring of drought and desertification processes in LAC should receive priority attention and be promoted through closer interlinkages with measures undertaken at the national and regional levels.

185. Specific benchmarks and indicators should be developed for a wide range of factors, such as biophysical conditions, sustainable socioeconomic development and politico-institutional aspects in the region, using standardized methodologies. Only up-to-date information will enable the countries of the region to determine whether their endeavours to address land degradation and curb its negative effects have been successful. Although it is of paramount importance to build and strengthen human resource and institutional capacities for generating, processing and disseminating information, the monitoring tools should be simple, user-friendly and capable of being operated by communities and decision-makers with little experience in using computer-based models and software.

186. The NFPs should receive support for promoting interactions between existing national databases and other subregional, regional and international information systems, with the aim of consolidating scientific information on desertification control, the prevention and mitigation of the effects of drought, land and water management, vegetative cover and biomass protection. Permanent communication should be established between the scientific community and decision-makers, as well as field-level end-users to whom information should be transferred on a regular basis. DESELAC can play a very important role in this regard, for data collection and the dissemination of information.

G. Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

187. There are good opportunities in LAC countries for the exchange of information and for innovative cooperation schemes that take advantage of available knowledge and experience to reverse land degradation processes. The region is an enormous wealth of traditional knowledge and best practices which need to be recorded and made available world-wide.

188. Many institutions have already started collecting specific knowledge and techniques that native populations have developed through centuries and applied within their own environmental and cultural contexts. Traditional knowledge and practices offer a broad range of opportunities for cooperation within the region. Researchers have in fact identified similarities and complementarities among distinct environments where this enormous knowledge can be put into practice.

189. Sharing available capacities, diverse experiences and even limited resources is therefore crucial to a process which aims to ensure true cooperation and sound results in bridging capability gaps. Once again, the initiatives envisaged require secure funding at the national and international levels.

Annex I

LIST OF COUNTRY PARTIES HAVING SUBMITTED THEIR NATIONAL REPORTS

Country	Date of ratification	Date of submission of second national report
1. Antigua and Barbuda	06/06/1997	26/04/2002
2. Argentina	06/01/1997	25/04/2002
3. Barbados	14/05/1997	02/05/2002
4. Bahamas	11/10/2000	07/07/2002
5. Belize	23/07/1998	
6. Bolivia	01/08/1996	11/04/2002
7. Brazil	08/06/1999	26/04/2002
8. Chile	11/11/1997	26/04/2002
9. Colombia	08/06/1999	25/04/2002
10. Costa Rica	08/01/1998	24/04/2002
11. Cuba	13/03/1997	22/04/2002
12. Dominica	08/12/1997	
13. Dominican Republic	26/06/1997	25/04/2002
14. Ecuador	06/09/1995	03/05/2002
15. El Salvador	27/06/1997	22/04/2002
16. Grenada	28/05/1997	24/04/2002
17. Guatemala	10/09/1998	30/04/2002
18. Guyana	26/06/1997	12/04/2002
19. Haiti	25/09/1996	17/05/2002
20. Honduras	25/06/1997	25/04/2002
21. Jamaica	12/11/1997	
22. Mexico	03/04/1995	
23. Nicaragua	17/02/1998	30/04/2002
24. Panama	04/04/1996	22/04/2002
25. Paraguay	15/01/1997	26/04/2002
26. Peru	09/11/1995	25/04/2002
27. Saint Kitts and Nevis	30/06/1997	
28. Saint Lucia	02/07/1997	29/04/2002
29. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	16/03/1998	22/04/2002
30. Suriname	01/06/2000	03/05/2002
31. Trinidad and Tobago	08/06/2000	07/05/2002
32. Uruguay	17/02/1999	02/05/2002
33. Venezuela	29/06/1998	02/05/2002

Annex II

STATUS OF ACTION PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL FORUMS/WORKSHOPS

Country	Status of national action programme	Date of national forum
Antigua and Barbuda	In preparation	
Argentina	Concluded	
Barbados	Draft version	
Bahamas		
Belize		
Bolivia	Concluded	
Brazil	National policy approved	
Chile	Concluded	
Colombia	In preparation	
Costa Rica	In preparation	
Cuba	Concluded	
Dominica		
Dominican Republic	In preparation	
Ecuador	Draft version	
El Salvador	National policy approved	
Grenada	In preparation	May 2001
Guatemala	Draft version	
Guyana		
Haiti	In preparation	
Honduras		
Jamaica	Draft version	
Mexico	Concluded	
Nicaragua	Draft version	
Panama		
Paraguay	In preparation	
Peru	Concluded	
Saint Kitts and Nevis		June 2001
Saint Lucia		May 2001
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	In preparation	April 2001
Suriname		April 2001
Trinidad and Tobago		
Uruguay	In preparation	
Venezuela	Draft version	

- - - - -